Mediated Empowerments:
An Ethnography of Four, All-Girls' "Public Schools" in North India

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ABSTRACT

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This ethnography takes place at four of northern India's most renowned, all-girls' private boarding schools, established in reference to the British Public Schooling model mainly during the tail ends of colonialism by Indian queens and British *memsahibs* on the sub-continent. It is a story told from the points of view of founders, administrators, and teachers, but primarily from that of students, based on fieldwork conducted from July 2013 through June 2014. Schools heralded as historic venues of purported upper-caste girls' emancipation, this study interrogates the legacies of this colonial-nationalist moment by examining how these institutions and their female students engage in newer processes and discourses of class formation and gendered empowerment through schooling. For one, it considers the dichotomous (re)constructions of gendered and classed personhoods enacted through exclusionary modernities, particularly in terms of who gains access to these schools, both physically and through symbolic forms of belonging. It then examines the reclamation of these constructs within (inter)national development discourses of girls' empowerment and the role of neoliberal privatization in reconstituting elite schooling experiences with gender as its globalizing force. Here, seemingly paradoxical relationships between such concepts as discipline and freedom, duties and rights, collective responsibility and individual competition are explored, arguing that the pressures of academic success, tensions over the future, and role of high stakes examinations and privatized tutoring are contributing to student experiences of performative or fatiguing kinds of empowerment. Through such frames, extreme binary constructions of empowerment are

complicated, demonstrating how female Public School students exist more within middling spaces of "betweenness," of *practiced mediation*. Empowerment in this sense is not an achievable status, nor unidirectional process, but a set of learned tools or skills deployed in recurring moments of contradiction or in difficult deliberations, whereby students variously buy in, (re)create, opt-out of, or reject proposed models of "successful" or "legitimate," female personhood. Overall, this ethnography problematizes assumed relationships between empowerment and privilege, questions the alignments between school and the (upper-)middle class home, and suggests that as the reproductive capabilities of elite schooling are challenged in the face of newer venues of capital, these all-girls' Public Schools and their students are finding unique ways to remain or become the elite of consideration.

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INTRODUCTION

Mediated Empowerments

It was the 70th Anniversary celebration of Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School (MGD), its "Platinum Jubilee," a rather cool December afternoon in Jaipur sitting behind the school's stadium looking on to the open-air stage that often doubled as the junior school's platform for badminton practice. Today, however, it was covered by a deep maroon and gold canopy, the up-stage brick wall lined with potted ferns and fitted with a backdrop displaying MGD's main building in sepia tones. Over the past few days, I had watched the tent company assembling these draped fabric ceilings, chatting on nearby benches under trees with any number of MGDians bunking class or relaxing after lunch. The large, desert-like patch of land below the stage, usually the site of feeding peahens or students kicking up plumes of sand, was covered with a mossy tarp and rows upon rows of taupe plastic chairs. Those in the first few rows were padded and wrapped in white covers, reserved for the school's administration, Board of Governors, and Jaipur's royal family, red bows tied at their backs. Hundreds of alumnae had shown up for the event, now sitting in the audience according to batch year, a portion having color-coordinated their *sarees* and *salwar kameez* for the occasion. Current students sat in the rows behind in-uniform while the bright orange and blue of the school's *bai jis*[1] appeared intermittently beyond.

The event began with a *shloka* sung by the school's choir as the principal and members of the first class lit the "lamp of knowledge" beside a portrait of Maharani Gayatri Devi, adorned in a garland of marigolds. Following a fashion show exhibiting the evolution of the school's uniform through the decades, speeches were offered by a number of Old Girls. Each in some way mentioned the revolutionary nature of their founder queen, a trendsetter in fashion and in liberal

[1] Female service staff

values, modern in views and personage, culminating in her work to emancipate Rajasthan's women from *purdah* by opening the first school for upper-caste girls in the region. They advised current students about how lucky they were to attend such a school where they could gain exposure; learn to become "all-rounders," independent. In the final speech that afternoon, a former Head Girl (now professor at two premiere research universities in the United States) stood at the podium and stated that MGD was about "becoming" – "The extent to which we *witnessed* each other's lives made it so we would not be anonymous anymore…we became someone."

"So, is that what being an MGDian is all about?" I asked the 11th Standard girls sitting on either side of my chair through the applause.

Pratibha, who had dozed off during the very first speech, was jarred awake by my question's accompanying elbow, "Huh? Yea…that kind of girls' empowerment thing and all."

Titiksha rolled her eyes, smiling at her batchmate. She too had spent the entire event somewhat distracted, complaining more than a few times about how she was going to miss her off-campus, private tuitions[2] if the ceremony went on much longer. "It's because back then they…you know, girls from those types of families…didn't get much of an education because they couldn't leave their homes. Rajasthan was very orthodox, backward in that time, so this was a very revolutionary step on the Rajmata's[3] part. You can say her vision has lived on…to empower girls, to make them most importantly economically independent and to have a mind of their own…to speak for themselves. But now…," she paused, her legs anxiously bouncing under her chair as she looked at her watch and then craned her neck toward the school's gates as if sensing an awaiting auto, "it's [about] being 600 girls in one."

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[2] Pronounced "t(y)o͞oˈSH(ə)ns," a name common in India for any number of private tutoring or coaching sessions.
[3] Queen Mother; here referencing Maharani Gayatri Devi.

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This dissertation is in essence a story of four schools, Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School (MGD), Jaipur; Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya (SKV), Gwalior; Welham Girls' High School, Dehradun; and Mayo College Girls' School, Ajmer, four of northern India's most renowned, all-girls' private boarding schools, established in reference to the British Public Schooling model mainly during the tail ends of colonialism by Indian queens and British *memsahibs* on the sub-continent. It is a story told from the points of view of founders, administrators, and teachers, but primarily from that of students, both previous and current. Schools heralded as historic venues of purported upper-caste girls' emancipation where various temporal and socio-political ideologies of development, modernity, the nation, and female personhood were (re)produced and contested, I entered this project questioning the place and purpose of India's all-girls' Public Schools today. How did their origins or founding missions interact with more contemporary, (inter)national development discourses that similarly identified them as sites of girls' empowerment, privilege, and success, their students as their exemplars? What exactly was the relationship between these latter elements; how did these institutions delivery and enact such messages; and, what's more, how were they variously received, owned, and embodied by female students? Relatedly, what were the paths, pressures, and strategies experienced and employed by students as they engaged with these diverse requirements of contemporary success, to remain or become the elite of consideration? I saw these schools as places that both concretized and problematized models of social reproduction, empowerment via education, femininity, and privilege; their students, poised to engage with seemingly vast contradictions of purpose and person.

Throughout the year, as with Pratibha and Titiksha, I asked any number of students (and adult others) of these schools what it meant to be an MGDian, an SKVian, a Welhamite, or Mayoite. In response, many current, senior students echoed the descriptions put forth by MGD's Old Girls, captured in interviews or surveys. It was about being "confident," "bold," "recognized," "lucky," "privileged," "independent," "a responsible citizen," or "able to know the outside world," for example. They talked of school prestige and history (*e.g.* to be "the best;" it's a "tag;" to "carry a legacy;" to be "royal," to "be in a class of your own"); of identity (*e.g.* "to become your true self," "a little different from others," to be "what you really are," "to be transformed," "knowing yourself, your hidden talents, your inner you;" to be "unique," "(un)disciplined," it's "an attitude"); and of associated skills (*e.g.* to be "an all-rounder," to "speak fluent English"). They also utilized phrases and terms commonly linked to neoliberal narratives of empowerment (*e.g.* "can speak for herself," "a girl who can independently stand anywhere in life," "to be free," "to have opportunities," "exposure," "to stand up for what is right," "to stand shoulder to shoulder with men and achieve their ambitions," "no limitations").

These sentiments, in many ways, are familiar. They speak of work done by scholars on the reproduction of capital at elite schools where students from higher socio-economic backgrounds come to occupy similar positions in society by accessing these institutions and their resources, a form of social reproduction that is often veiled or "misrecognized" as legitimate through a language of merit or hard work (*see* Bourdieu 1977; Demerath 2009; Goffman 1970; Khan 2011; Lareau 2003; Stevens 2007; Willis 1977). They echo work arguing for the emancipatory capabilities of education for girls, especially in places like India, where access to quality schooling in specific contexts is believed to lead to resources, skills, information, opportunities, freedoms, participation in decision making processes, the formation of

individuated identities, and the acquisition of social networks, particularly entailing other women (*see* Kabeer 2010; Klenk 2010; Monkman 2011; Najmabadi 1998; Proweller 1998; Sen 1999; Stromquist 1995, 2002). However, in addition to these responses, students most frequently used descriptors of balance or constraint to mark these identities.

For one, they regularly invoked a language of dichotomies. In this sense, being a member of these schools meant being, for example, "modern in outlook while holding on to your morals and rich Indian cultural beliefs;" "balanced between tradition and the modern world;" being "a modern girl with moral values;" "modern with a pinch of tradition;" being "a girl who carries her cultural values combined with modernity;" "someone who knows her values [and] tradition but at the same time is equally Westernized and modern;" being someone who "lives in the present era but has her values deep-rooted [sic]." And secondly, when students mentioned attributes such as bravery, boldness, or courage they were consistently qualified with associations of struggle, resiliency, or compromise – *e.g.* "facing the worst with a smile;" being "adjustable" or "able to adjust;" "ready to face hardships, challenges, difficulties at any time;" "a burden;" "too many expectations;" "learning to live through tough situations;" being "strong and brave enough to overcome problems and deal with obstacles;" "to be resilient in the face of adversity;" "to be able to carry as much burden as expected;" "to make the harder choices." I found these types of associations specifically absent at their brother schools, where adjustability was more commonly related in student surveys to notions of omnivorousness (Khan 2011); or as one male student put it in his survey, being a Dosco[4] is "to feel just as comfortable in a slum as a government office," though there are some that would cynically argue these locations are more similar than not.

I argue there is a relationship between these latter two categories, one of *mediation*, connected to a history of upper caste/class girls' schooling in northern India and the founding

[4] The name for students associated with The Doon School, Dehradun, brother school to Welham Girls'.

missions of the all-girls' Public Schools but also to the ways these institutions and their students engage with more recent discourses of neoliberal development. It is a relationship that emerges from the legacies of an intersecting and often contradictory colonial-nationalist modernity – responsible for rhetorical inventions of gendered and classed personhoods – and more recent, (inter)national development discourses of women's empowerment and high-stakes competition.

As this study engages with certain arguments pertaining to the benefits of girls' education as well as schools' roles in the governmentalization of female subjects or the fetishizing of cultural authenticity, it is in these comparative extremes that I suggest both stances are overstated. It is necessary to reconsider these empowerment discourses on two fronts. First, I question those development narratives that identify certain "classes" of girls (*e.g.* students of India's premiere Public Schools) as outside their purview by labeling them as "already empowered" except when declaring them fit to empower others. In considering the complexities of upper class/caste girls' experiences in North India and the mediations they and their schools undergo, this study reveals several problematic aspects to this approach. Not only do these frameworks make "empowerment" an upper-class practice that is then gifted upon passive, pre-determined groups of "othered" girls, but I found students at these Public Schools do not collectively or universally consider themselves "empowered," despite or because of their socio-economic status or access to these schools. Furthermore, there exists a somewhat contradictory relationship between the upper class/caste exclusionary practices of these elite institutions and their purported missions of girls' upliftment. Second, I also question those critiques that consider development narratives and projects of empowerment *solely* through the supposed disenfranchisement or violence inherent in their neoliberal frameworks of governmentality and self-discipline. Such views are similarly unproductive as they undermine the possibility of

female agency in *all* situations. As argued by Lata Mani (2003:376), when considering the problem of women's agency binary terms such as coercion/consent are unhelpful since "structures of domination are best understood if we can grasp how we remain agents even in the moments in which we are being intimately, viciously oppressed." Also, a discourse of woman-as-victim without a dynamic conception of agency leaves us with passive beings acted upon wherein the Third World woman is "always, already victim" (Mohanty 1984).

This dissertation, therefore, seeks to dismantle such extreme binary constructions of empowerment in terms of its processes, experiences, and dialectics by instead suggesting that female Public School students exist within middling spaces of "betweenness," of practiced mediation. Here, empowerment is not an achievable status, nor unidirectional process, as suggested by previous theorists, but a set of *learned tools or skills* deployed in recurring moments of contradiction or in difficult deliberations. It is located in the protocols, practices, and performances enacted in response to recognized structural constraints or social cues that take form as students variously buy in, (re)create, opt-out of, or reject proposed models of "successful" or "legitimate" female personhood. As such, processes of empowered mediation and mediated empowerments became curricular fodder for students and all-girls' Public Schools alike. In these educational spaces, mediation was constantly at work and (un)consciously worked upon. It was an ability identified by a number of my informants as something to be proud of, an essentialized character of elite, female identity, but also something resented in its gendered requirements.

These are the stories this dissertation aims to unpack. It a discussion not so much about cause and effect or the "impacts" of events, though certain socio-political moments and/or education policies do play a part, but more an analysis of the various calls and responses, the

pushes and pulls, of a dynamic system students and schools must continually negotiate, a mindful analysis of struggle and determinations of success. As put forth by Lawrence Cremin, education becomes synonymous with interaction as "effort;" it is "the process through which people, everywhere, unceasingly, and always in concert with others, work at changing themselves and their consociates through often *difficult deliberations*" (Varenne 2007: 1565, emphasis added). It is in this way that these four schools serve as potent sites for students to mediate interlocking, often conflicting, notions of gender, class, and empowerment in their own lives.

The rest of this introductory chapter will lay the backdrop for this project, both historically and theoretically. First, I will address the establishment of the Indian Public School at the intersections of feudalism, colonialism, and nationalism. In doing so, I will show how these projects were as much ideological projects as socio-political missions of governance in which educational reform, of schools and curricula in particular, was used to legitimize rule through discourses of modernity, represented by the figure and condition of upper-caste/class Indian women. I will examine how these educational projects set-up early dichotomies relating certain descriptors with classed masculinity and femininity. It is here that I will situate the founding of India's all-girls' Public Schools within the "woman question," of emancipation and control, of *balancing* "the best of the West" with "the best of the East," of becoming modern while retaining essential Indian traditions, complicating colonial and cultural-nationalist paradigms that placed women's agency solely in the "inner" realms of the home through a consideration of early Indian feminisms. It is with this foundation that I then locate and interrogate more contemporary discourses of (inter)national development and framings of women's empowerment through education. Within these schemas, schools like MGD, SKV,

Welham,[5] and Mayo as well as their students become again engaged in the paradoxical projects of modernity – of "achieving" empowered, independent selves, consumed with matters of choice, discipline, and duty, while navigating the various routes to success in a highly competitive educational system, of "being 600 girls in one."

A "Peculiar Colonial Sociology" and the "Politics of Modernity":[6] Imperial Binaries and Woman-as-Metaphor

The colonial legacy in South Asia is one of controlling, disciplining, totalizing, universalizing, "knowing," and "modernizing" the Indian body collective. Nicholas Dirks (2001) has suggested that "colonial knowledge both enabled conquest and was produced by it; in certain important ways, knowledge was what colonialism was all about." From the beginning of the British-Indian encounter, formulations of colonial modernity and its others emerged through the "woman question." In its first iteration, the status of woman became the index of India's social backwardness, simultaneously legitimizing colonial projects of "modernization" as well as early indigenous social reformers' aims at class and caste consolidation and national regeneration through appeals to a lost "Golden Age." In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, in particular, Utilitarian/Anglican and missionary critiques of the lacking morality of the natives suggested that such levels of Indian ("Hindoo") "barbarism" was measurable through their superstitions, ignorance, and, ultimately, mistreatment of women. Alongside instituting orderly, lawful, and

[5] Note that Welham Boys' School and Mayo College Boys' School in popular parlance usually go by the stand-alone terms, "Welham" and "Mayo," while their sister schools are usually identified with the added descriptor, "Girls'," *i.e.* "Welham Girls'" or "Mayo Girls'." For the purposes of this project, however, "Welham" and "Mayo" will usually refer to the girls' schools, being the main subjects of this study, while the boys' schools will be identified with the added descriptor, "Boys'," *i.e.* "Welham Boys'" and "Mayo Boys'."

[6] Mrinalini Sinha (2006) coined "peculiar colonial society" to describe the particular constitution of the relationship between the state and society in imperial India; Abu-Lughod (1998) questions the politics of modernity in terms of how new ideas and practices considered "modern" and progressive are implanted not toward emancipation but new forms of social control.

rational procedures of governance in accordance with the liberal ideals of the Enlightenment, therefore, the Raj saw itself as performing a "civilizing mission," especially against the atrocities perpetrated against women by educating the upper echelons of India's men. By determining language(s) of instruction, curricula, and eventually establishing of a system of schools headed by British Headmasters for a very specific clientele, the British sought to define what it meant to "be educated," as well as what it meant to be elite, modern, civilized, Indian, and appropriately masculine (and feminine).

While early models set-up in the Eastern regions of Bengal, the original seat of British imperial power, were deemed "failures" due to the perceived "effeminate" utilitarianism of Bengali men, colonial administrators in their attempts to "form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect," as put by Thomas Macaulay in 1834, established a new set of schools known as the Chiefs' Colleges in India's princely states of the North and West, exclusively for the education and grooming of the sons of chiefs, princes, and leading *thakurs* [landlords]. Though also eventually deemed failures by the British as they saw persisting caste anxieties and hierarchies among the feudal elite as antithetical to "Western" educational ideals of rationality, reason, and democracy, these schools would eventually give rise to and in many cases become India's first "Public Schools," reimagined by Indian nationalists as the liberal and secular counters to their former feudal selves (*see* Appendix A for a more detailed history of India's Chiefs' Colleges and the establishment of the Indian Public Schools Conference (IPSC)). Though works like that of Srivastava (1998) and de Souza (1974) have importantly examined the projects of early colonial and nationalist endeavors to create the modern, male citizen-subject through the emergence of the Indian Public School, they omit a

consideration of its parallel – that in creating the "masculine" through a "feminine" opposite, deliberations over girls' education on the subcontinent emerged as well. As the figure and condition of upper caste/class women served as evidence of India's lacking civility to the British in the 19th century, girls' education served as fodder for Indian male agendas of identity and nation building in the 20th.

During this time, female education and schooling was the subject of constant discussion in colonial India, often in staggering disproportion to the number of girls affected (Seth 2007). Mani (1987:117) contends that within South Asian socio-political historiography, women are neither subjects nor objects but rather the *ground* upon which contestations of male power are fought. As men vie for power, the "figure of woman" continually becomes co-opted as representative of something other than herself – tradition, the nation, masculinity, religion, progress, etc. "The compulsion of colonial rule to extract surplus, create classes conducive to its rule, and to produce legitimizing ideologies led in part to an aggravation of existing unequal relations within many sections of Indian society" (Sangari and Vaid 1989). [7] This compulsion is seen particularly in the eminently colonial construction and division of modernity and tradition as determined by the place and condition of Indian women.

As Utilitarians used the condition of upper caste women to legitimize their civilizing mission as one of reform and rule, proto-nationalists like early members of the Brahmo Samaj, buying in to imperial messaging of the West's *current* intellectual and cultural supremacy, took it upon themselves to rid the home of misplaced religious orthodoxies and ritual backwardness. That being said, India's native intelligentsia were not just passive recipients of a colonial presentation of their "true" past but were constantly engaged in selecting particular aspects from a growing body of knowledge emerging from their own present socio-political interests

[7] Examples of these aggravations include gender-based property and inheritance laws.

(Chakravarti 1989:32). The "rule of colonial difference" shaped nationalist responses, not as a political movement but as a cultural and discursive project, in which ideals of womanhood and notions of the modern were key elements (Chatterjee 1993). Much of the reform against supposed ritual backwardness and female inferiority proposed by India's intelligentsia was directed at the princely class. In feudal India, where power was ensured through the continuation of pure bloodlines, arranged intra-caste marriages, and childbirth, the control of women and their bodies was a constant preoccupation. Seen as vessels of family, caste, and male purity and honor, women were protected from the outer world of impurities through a number of diverse practices connected to caste, religion, and region such as *purdah*, Hindu widowhood, *sati*, child marriage, dowry, and female infanticide. These customs and practices, among others, became the focus of imperial as well as liberal and conservative indigenous reform alike. Burdened with "saving brown women from brown men," the practice of *sati* became an immediate target for the Company's reform legislation (Spivak 1988).[8] As such, British governmentality took an increasingly interventionist form seeking to quickly irradiate India's "social evils" through the implementation of a rule of law.[9] Such interventionist policies, however, triggered the rise of countering groups of resurgent Orientalists and "cultural" nationalists on the subcontinent who saw the attack of Utilitarians/Anglicists on Hindu civilization, the perceived threat of Christian missionaries, and the abolition of *sati* as an intrusion into the Hindu family, marking a new approach to the woman question through the 1870s (Chakravarti 1989).

[8] Up through the early decades of the 19th century, Kolsky (2005:632) notes how "the East India Company had administered a plurality of legal sources, including regional regulations, Acts of Parliament, Hindu and Muslim personal law, Islamic criminal law, and the widely interpreted Roman principle of 'justice, equity and good conscience'."

[9] The approach took form in Bentinck's Abolition of Sati Act (1829/1832) which declared widow immolation of any kind as homicide. Speaking before Parliament in 1833, Macaulay, supported the new Act by stating that their role in India was "to give good government to a people to whom we cannot give a free government" (Kolsky 2005:631).

This "second" formulation, which emerged at the latter half of the 19th century, subsumed the figure of woman within her caste or religious communities. The discourse of cultural nationalism in claiming autonomy over the women's question consigned the agency for such reforms to the internal self-regulation of the *community* instead of the colonial state, making reforms for women issues "social" in nature rather than "political" (Sinha 2006:44). From here, the creation and division of public and private realms as locations of Indian barbarity or glory influenced the types of interventions attempted. Much of the rhetoric contradictorily placed primacy on martial womanhood on par and alongside men in religious duties and public endeavors (subsequently blaming Muslim invaders for cloistering women in the home), legitimizing bodily sacrifice for the greater nationalist good yet constructing the control of women's sexuality as fundamental to regenerating the Aryan race (*ibid.*:56-7).[10] Thus, "the priorities of the community set limits on the 'proper' agency of women" (Sinha 2006:45).

During this time, Indian nationalists argued that it was undesirable to imitate the West in anything other than the material aspects of life. It was unnecessary since the spiritual domain of the East was superior. Nationalism became a problem of *selecting* what to take from the West and what to reject. The material domain was external, influencing, conditioning, and forcing Indians to adjust. In comparison, the spiritual was believed to lie within, as the true Indian self. Feeling powerless in the public sphere, Indian men exercised their citizenship within the private. Partha Chatterjee (1989) demonstrates how the home/world [*ghar*/*bahir*] dichotomy was not simply a mark of social conservatism or a total rejection of the West and modernity as argued by certain liberal points of view but an attempt to make modernity *consistent* with the nationalist

[10] The latter anxiety, for example, espoused by the founder of the Arya Samaj religious movement, Dayananda, even impacted conceptualizations of schooling systems. Here, while both boys and girls would be entitled to an education, it was deemed crucial that they must be physically segregated, separated by a distance of at least three miles (*ibid.*:57).

project. Nationalism thus answered the woman question according to its own agenda (*ibid.*). The new nation was imagined as embodied within the private, the home, where the spiritual and "true" Indian identity was still found unfettered by colonialism. While men in the public sphere were essentially de-Indianized, having to engage in colonial politics and its economy, Indian women who remained in the home were (re)imagined as the embodiment of the nascent nation, creating associative binaries between the public/private, inner/outer, Western/Eastern, pollution/ purity, and male/female. *Bharat Mata* [Mother India], for example, as the territorial embodiment of the Indian nation as mother/goddess, became utilized as a mobilizing artifact in the late 19th century, holding multiple meanings for collective notions of nation and gender.

Figure 1 (*left*) Bharat Mata represented by The Ahmedabad New textile Mills
Figure 2 (*right*) Maqbool Fida Husain, Center panel of *50 Years of Emerging India: A* Triptych. Illustration for the *Times of* India (Bombay), special supplement, August 15, 1997 (*right*) (reproduced from Ramaswamy 2010)

In the lead-up to independence and thereafter she was a mother holding a child, the Hindu warrior goddesses Durga or Kali riding a lion, or at the height of Gandhi's influence on

nonviolent nationalism, the *pativrata*[11] goddess Parvati, holding a spinning wheel [*charka*] or flag (national, Congress, etc.) instead of weapons (Ramaswamy 2010).

Yet, as Indian women became burdened with the weight of the new nation, it became clear that it was a particularly *(upper-)middle class/caste* burden. In order to emancipate the nation from the reigns of a foreign power it was necessary for Indian nationalists to first emancipate its women. Consequently, nationalist reforms began to insist on certain kinds of education for *their* women, seen as responsible for instilling in the next generation certain Indian morals and religiosity. Some early opposition to the opening of schools for women was backed by an appeal to tradition, which supposedly prohibited women from being introduced to bookish learning, but these arguments hardly gained much support (Chatterjee 1989). The real threat was seen to lie in the fact that early schools and arrangements for teaching women at home were organized by Christian missionaries. There was a fear of both proselytization and the exposure of women to harmful Western influences. The threat was removed when in the 1850s Indians themselves began to open schools for girls, educating a new class of women in home economics, hygiene, and the science of child rearing, not to mention *Indian-ness*. In these constructions, this class of women soon became educated and "liberated" as "modern housewives," differentiated from the selfish British *memsahibs*, their uneducated, lower-class sisters, and older generations. Such gendered changes in personhood not only left the mass of the Indian people (*e.g.* Muslims, the lower classes, etc.) outside of such reforms for social change, but the nationalist construction of education reform as a project of self-emancipation for the "new woman," veiled her subjection to a new patriarchy. The images of "woman as goddess" or "mother" served to erase her sexuality in public, making her freedom an issue of the community and not the state. Thus,

[11] *Pativrata*, literally translates into a vow [*vrat*] to the husband [*pati*] and was imagined as the appropriate, upper-caste, Hindu female form upon marriage, self-sacrificing for the sake of husband, family, and caste honor.

though identified with a "reified notion of culture that cast it narrowly as a 'social problem' and hence the object of 'social reform,'" the terms of the debate over the woman question did not remain static as "its articulations from the outset were tied to shifting political and material concerns" (Sinha 2006:43).

While those like Chatterjee have suggested that women's agency and participation in imperial-nationalist politics was solely located in the fragmentary and isolated interiority of the home, and others like Oldenburg (2002:45) have argued that Indian women remained considerably marginal to the debates over their own status in society, Mrinalini Sinha (2000:625) has contended that such understandings "[elide] the full ramifications of liberal Indian feminist agency" in the outer or material world of Indian nationalism, discounting the "discourse of Indian feminism in the early women's movement." Indeed, elite (Hindu) women gradually became involved in politics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries through small local clubs and women's auxiliaries of the Indian National Congress (INC) and the National Social Conference (NSC). Originally, these organizations were founded and led by men; and "while male-inspired and male-guided organizations for women did invaluable work in educating women and providing them with their first experience with public work they also imposed limitations" (Forbes 1996:68). Building off patriarchal norms and ideologies, male reformers regarded the household as the primary focus and fundamental arena of activity for women. Responding to their discontent with male-guided organizations, however, women began to found their own associations in the early 20th century where women leaders were defining women's issues as female education, child marriage, the observance of *purdah*, and women's status in the family (*ibid.*:72). While admittedly also mostly upper-caste, Hindu organizations that only hesitantly challenged the patriarchy of an inherited tradition, groups such as the Women's Indian

Association (WIA) "nonetheless created a sociopolitical environment for woman qua woman at a time when Indian nationalism was largely dominated by men" (Ramaswamy 2010:258). This beginning of a new "feminist phase" of women's organizing in India made for direct confrontation between the social and the political (Sinha 2006:174).

Many scholars argue that women's participation in the nationalist project ultimately legitimized the independence movement by calling into question the British's right to rule (Forbes 1996:121). However, in a kind of return to "tradition," these political movements often linked an "idealized" notion of womanhood with nationalism, recreating colonial binaries of modernity/tradition in its recruitment of women and plans for education. Gandhi, for instance, used the orthodox Hindu construction of the *pativrata* [ideal Hindu woman] to "empower" women to join the nationalist movement in a specific kind of way. He claimed that India needed women leaders who were "pure, firm, and self-controlled" like the ancient heroines of Damayanti, Draupadi, and Sita.[12] It was through these references that Gandhi was arguably able to recruit women to his *satyagraha* [peaceful resistance], creating a nationalist movement he believed fit for women and Hindu society at large. Still, in retrospect, literary theorist and feminist scholar, Gayatri Spivak (1988:102) suggests that "…between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third world woman' caught between tradition and modernization."

[12] *Damayanti* was the faithful and long-suffering wife of *Nala* who was able to recognize her husband in any guise; while *Draupadi*, wife of the five *Pandava* brothers in the *Mahabharata*, was recognized by *Krishna* for her chastity and innocence. *Sita*, wife of *Ram*, followed her husband into exile, suffered abduction from the demon *Ravana*, and underwent an ordeal of fire to prove her fidelity. In fact, Gandhi often compared the British to the several-headed demon *Ravana*, to whom, under colonialism, the enslaved people were losing all sense of *dharma* (righteousness) (Forbes 1996:124-5).

As such, during this period as much as women served as the ground upon which contestations of male power were fought and tradition defined, the first all-girls' Public Schools served as salons for the enactments of such discourses concerning the upper caste/class female body. Their residential natures, originally stated missions, and curricula are testaments to these socio-political debates concerning the woman question, seated in moral discourses established through the gendered separation of social space – the outer/material/profane/male and the inner/ spiritual/sacred/female – and class anxieties over achieved modernity and preserved traditions through a certain "type" of elite, all-girls' education. North Indian feudalism, its related caste customs, and its interactions with colonial powers restricted the education of upper-caste girls even more so than in other areas of the country. Figures such as Maharani Gayatri Devi, Vijaya Raje Scindia, and their future schools' British Headmistresses were seeped in these narratives of gendered and classed personhood. All-girls' Public Schools became sites where these dualisms were created, contested, negotiated, and embodied to find meaning in the self and society, as venues and exemplars of upper-caste women's emancipation and restriction. And though a number of subaltern studies feminists have asserted that it is easier to "recover" or "hear" the voices of "woman worthies" (*i.e.* elite, upper-class, or royal women), the experiences of students or of the "female child," constructed and identified as something "missing" by British colonialists, is often erased in favor of a static, *a priori* "woman" figure by colonial and nationalist rhetoric (Lal 2005, 2013). With that said, Ruby Lal (2013) has identified "classic spaces" such as schools, the palace, and the home as locations where the "playfulness," agency, and creativity of the "girl-child/woman" reappears. She argues that the static, monolithic, unhistorical, quality of the figure of woman produced by the British colonialists and Indian

reformers can be challenged through recognition of girlhood action and participation in constrained spaces and in the *process* of "becoming."

It is by interrogating these historic relationships, therefore, that we may situate all-girls' Indian Public Schools within these ideological constructions, examining their experiences and engagement (in addition to those of their first students), contextualizing what was at stake in their establishment. This is particularly vital as students today are at times similarly erased by congruent, contemporary narratives of gendered privilege and empowerment, narratives that label them as undifferentiated, as "already empowered" and fit to empower a familiar "other" established along discursive spectrums of the "non-modern" and "modern." It is here that we consider the intricacies and complexities students mediate in their processes of "becoming."

Development Discourses:
Women's Empowerment and Education

Appadurai (1986:358) notes that, "there is a tendency for places to become showcases for specific issues overtime." These "theoretical handles" or "gatekeeping concepts," he suggests, such as hierarchy in the case of India, have historically worked to set-up gender or caste as *the* way to "knowing" India (*ibid.*:357). The woman question and its relation to socio-economic and political discourses on nation building, development, tradition versus modernity, gendered identities, the family, and the role of (English-medium) education has a long and sustained history. What continues to change is how these discourses are (re)packaged and mobilized.

Following Indian independence, the 1950s and 1960s were characterized by a Nehruvian paternalistic welfare state, a model of development planning with outward projections of national self-sufficiency and progress. Due partly to a belief in the newly minted constitution's

proclamations of forthcoming equality, some scholars suggest, these decades existed as a kind of "silent period" in the women's movement (John 2002). Though, all-girls' Indian Public Schools and their students were regularly made the theaters and exemplars of girls' emancipation. In Jaipur, for instance, visiting dignitaries from Queen Elizabeth and the Kennedys to Jawaharlal Nehru and Laxmi Pandit, hosted by Maharaja Man Singh II and Maharani Gayatri Devi, were brought to MGD, its spaces, curricula, and girls made proof of the state's and nation's levels of progress, development, and preservation of Indian traditions. And even though Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister would later become fundamentally responsible for the displacement of India's feudal nobility, the removal of princely purses and lands, and the imprisonments of Rajmatas Gayatri Devi and Vijaya Raje Scindia half a decade later,[13] she did visit both of their schools in addition to Welham Girls' in the late 1960s, laying SKV's foundation stone, attending Welham's Founders' Day event, and giving a speech at MGD on its 25th anniversary where she appealed to similar imperatives of girls' education and modernity, stating:

> The Buddha said, "Be a lamp unto yourself." That is the message of science also, to search for truth and for knowledge. It is up to us to use that knowledge for the good of our country and humanity at large. We can ensure our future not by harping on our past glories but by making the present livable. India's greatest need today is to modernize herself. It is not enough to learn. It is more important to have a scientific and rational outlook to meet the challenges of the fast changing world. Educated girls have a special part to play in fostering a climate of justice and in liberating our people from the hold of superstition. My greetings and good wishes to the Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School on its Silver Jubilee. (*MGD Silver Jubilee Souvenir* 1968)

[13] The Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act (1974) under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) went particularly after former Indian royalty as it presumed to tax these families for their various treasuries of gold and jewelry. In February 1974, the government said they found over $17-million worth of currency, diamonds, emeralds, precious metals including a cache of gold coins and bullion in a secret chamber under the floor of one of Maharani Gayatri Devi's palaces. She was taken to Tihar jail where she served six months, eventually becoming roommates with Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia.

Perhaps, not unrelatedly, it was in the following decade that women began to declare their felt-invisibility within the nation's development processes. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Indian women criticized the Indian state as responsible for excluding them from the promises of modernization and development as such strategies underestimated their labor force participation within informal sectors and domestic spheres while ignoring issues surrounding women's health, disparate sex ratios, and violence against women (John 1996, 2002). It was in the late 1980s, then, that MGD, SKV, Welham Girls', and Mayo Girls' became rebranded as venues of girls' "empowerment" – as proof of what quality education could look like and what it could do for India's "plighted" girls. These associations were in part self-driven invocations of their founding histories, identities, and missions, but also externally placed by narratives and projects of (inter)national development thought achievable through the female figure and education.

Soon after, notions of development, the economy, and national identity attained new ideological legitimacy according to the market and discourses of "agency" alongside India's neoliberal reforms. By the late 1990s, starting with more local initiatives and state-driven development policies targeting subaltern women in India, empowerment became a global matter of human rights, equal opportunity, and socio-economic development, linked to a vocabulary of free markets, privatization, competition, and choice. Various development actors, including international agencies, governments, NGOs, GONGOs (government-non-government organizations), PPPs (public-private partnerships), and feminist groups working at international, national, and local levels, scrambled to implement grassroots empowerment programs (Sharma 2008:xvi). Quoting Sharma's (2008) list of recent international women's empowerment programs, the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG) featured the need to "promote gender equality and empower women" as a key objective of our times (United Nations

n.d.); the World Bank's new "human" face in 2000 was about poverty alleviation and empowerment (Kahn 2000); the Government of India declared 2001 as "Women's Empowerment Year" (Menon-Sen 2001), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) continues to facilitate empowerment programs (Leve 2001).[14] Throughout the 1990s and 2000s there was "a move away from welfare-style dependent development toward empowerment-style self-development manifested in the 'gender and development' (GAD) policy regime of the neoliberal Indian state" (Sharma 2008:xvi). These discourses all support an argument that through education, women can become empowered to help themselves, particularly in becoming economically independent.

During my time in the field, in part due to a series of highly-publicized cases of crimes against women and gender-based prejudice headlined by the Delhi bus gang rape of a 23-year old female medical student in December 2010, greater public calls for programs of redress emerged. To this end, when the campaign managers for the BJP's[15] 2014 Prime Ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, began organizing a series of platform advertisements they made sure to include one about women's empowerment. I came across a printed version in a copy of the *Hindustan Times* in SKV's library that October 2013. It read, "Let's empower women. Let's make our public spaces safer. Let's empower women through education and skill development. Let's ensure women have greater participation in decision making. Time For Change. Time for Modi. Vote BJP."

[14] In March 2015, for example, the Obama Administration, along with USAID and the Peace Corps, announced its expanding efforts to help adolescent girls worldwide to attend and complete school through an initiative called "Let Girls Learn" (the White House, Office of the Press Secretary n.d.). Many of this initiative's activities have taken place in India, with First Lady Michelle Obama visiting the country in early November 2015.

[15] The BJP or Bharatiya Janata Party [Indian People's Party] is known as India's conservative, right-wing party, with strong ideological ties to Hindutva and organizational ties to the Hindu nationalists, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). It emerged during the Emergency in 1977 when the Jana Sangh combined with several other parties.

Figure 3 Advertisement for BJP's PM Party Candidate, Narendra Modi, *Hindustan Times*, Oct. 2013

After Modi's election victory, the Prime Minister continued to call for a need to empower India's women, particularly through programs for educating the girl child. On International Women's Day in March 2014, he among many things spoke about how "women should be free to choose, whether it is about their career, education, marriage, or having a family," that economic freedom plays a very important role in empowering women, and that women play an important role in nation building. During his visit to the United States in September 2014, before a crowd of thousands in New York City's Madison Square Garden, he rattled off India's impressive achievements in gender equality – "While women in many countries of the world have to fight for their right to vote," he said, "there are 30% reservations for women in elected bodies in India; there has been a female Prime Minister; women form 25% of my cabinet; and 11% of the total strength of Parliament are women. But there is still work to be done." Being that "the most important factor for women's empowerment is the education of the girl child," Modi stated, a new governmental agenda has taken form under the slogan, "*Beti bechao, beti padhao"* [save the

girl child, educate the girl child]. Under this scheme, the new government has reportedly allocated Rs 100 crore (*i.e.* 1 billion) to girls' education as well as Rs 150 crore and Rs 50 crore to improving women's safety in cities and on public transportation. Schools were largely imagined as the starting point for changing mentalities about gender inequalities in the country. In 2013, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) announced a plan to implement gender sensitization programs and women's studies electives in affiliated schools. In 2015, this took form as a "kit on gender sensitivity" and training for teachers (Mishra 2015) as well as a check-list for gender sensitivity in "school environments, systems, and processes" (CBSE Annexure-L). Many of these programs, all-girls' Public School administrators and teachers would tell me, were modelled after curricula already taking place at institutions like theirs. That same year, Modi further went on to dedicate India's 66th Republic Day, on January 28, 2015, to women's empowerment [*stree shakti*].

Prior to the election, a vast majority of the senior students I spoke with at all four Public Schools supported Modi. Many of them had parents or family members who were politicians canvassing for the BJP or were advocates working for the Modi campaign. He was seen in many ways, similar to Barack Obama during his original presidential campaign in the United States, as an emblem for "change" among India's youth, an alternative to the stagnation and indifference seemingly offered by the Congress party and its legacy candidate, Rahul Gandhi. With that said other students I spoke to were not always so convinced. They saw many of the gestures made by Modi and his campaign team as simply savvy methods of pandering to the public. In early February 2014, for example, after an 11th Standard student at Mayo Girls' gave a glowing review of Modi in her dorm room (she was from the state of Gujarat, where Modi served as Chief Minister, and her father was an active member of the BJP), her Housemate, Sejal, who was

listening from her bed stated that she "definitely [had] a different opinion." I asked her what she meant. She adjusted her legs, re-crossing them on her mattress,

"Meaning…I don't know. I just don't really think he's going to change anything if he becomes Prime Minister…not about women anyways." Heeding my expression's call for further explanation she added, after a pause, "Politicians always say things people want to hear. The BJP isn't really…known for doing a lot for women…in the past that is. It's all a show."

Sejal's comments in many ways speak to feminist and development studies scholar, Mary John's (1999:145-6) supposition that "current national and global ethos of promoting women's rights are so powerful and pervasive that it is impossible for any political party to be openly indifferent, let alone hostile, to the cause of greater gender justice." But they also echo anthropologist, Aradhana Sharma's (2009:93) contention that much development work, both nationally and internationally, is *performative* or a "performed practice." At these all-girls' Public Schools, narratives of empowerment were rife. They appeared in classroom assignments, debate prompts, themes given for literary and performing arts competitions, speeches by visiting chief guests, career workshops, and so forth. They also had a sizable presence in Public School service initiatives, where students were encouraged to go out and empower others. As such, these schools were imagined as "partial penetrations" of dominant society (Willis 1977). Put forth by Sen (1999), education can be a tool of individual and social transformation intimately tied to people's abilities to obtain a range of "substantive freedoms" such as employment, political participation, and dignity. But while there is potential for education to transform people's lives it can also show how power, inequalities, and culture mediate people's *access* to "freedoms" that education provides (Jeffrey, Jeffery, & Jeffery 2008). Stromquist (2002:1978), too, has cautioned proclamations of education's "empowering" capabilities, pointing out that access is not enough;

there are cognitive and psychological dimensions to empowerment that schools can only impart through specific educational programs designed explicitly to achieve those ends. If knowledge is linked to power (Foucault 1977:27), access to institutions which purvey such knowledge can lead to participation and consciousness-raising, yet this depends on what type of knowledge is conveyed, produced, and practiced. In colonial, post-colonial, and even neo-colonial settings, curriculum and subject matter are frequently (un)consciously imbued with the ideologies of those in power, poised at retaining the status quo.

It is in this vein that I interrogate all-girls' Public School delivery, enactment, and ownership of empowerment discourses as well as the ways female students diversely engage. Klenk (2010) has suggested that globally circulating processes and discourses of development (*e.g.* "woman" as "problem;" or Third World as "underdeveloped") have become interwoven with questions of what it means to be human, female, (non)elite, and modern in a culturally specific context. There is a need, she states, to construct gendered development as a *process* rather than "woman" as a static figure (*see* Lal 2013; Rowlands 1997; Stromquist 1995, 2002). To this end, I contend international development projects often make the mistake of either undifferentiating the category of "Third World woman," instating blanket policies thought to serve all women regardless of context, or of creating overly determined categories based on false dichotomies differentiating those believed to be "already empowered" and those who are not. These approaches and assumptions are problematic when considering the students of India's all-girls' Public Schools, who in some ways fit popular descriptions of empowerment (*i.e.* access to resources, knowledge, and skills through their socio-economic and educational backgrounds), yet in other ways, in other spaces, do not. As posited by DeJaeghere & Lee (2011:29) referencing Sharma (2008), "Girls' and women's subjectivities and agency cannot be assumed as a singular

and shared identity; rather there are various assemblages of empowerment revealing multiple tensions in its local manifestations." There is a need for more intersectional understandings to empowerment and privilege, especially one that detaches these two concepts.

Furthermore, empowerment is contingent on "social climate" (Sen 1999) in that there are ways in which the environment conditions possibilities in the dialectical and shifting relationships of individuals and social contexts (Rowlands 1997). While (inter)national development programs have commonly prioritized access and achievements, inputs and outcomes, in their "measurements" of girls' empowerment, particularly in their considerations of all-girls' Indian Public Schools, I argue what actually happens *in school*, the processes of developing the ability to define one's goals and act upon them, is ascendant. This in many ways supports a capabilities approach (Sen 2009), one that "emphasizes a person's capability to lead the kind of life she values not only by the culmination of alternatives that she ends up with, but by the processes involved in making choices, or her agency freedom to choose alternatives within her ability and context" (DeJaeghere & Lee 2011:29).[16] It is about recognizing the ways in which people choose to do or be what they value in life, in relationship to the opportunities and constraints they may encounter (Monkman 2011:7), and acknowledges the particularities of individual lives and life contexts in a way that doesn't assume that everyone has the same values, priorities, or conditions within which they live.

In this way, empowerment discourses, as they are often presented to female students, can be extremely limiting and exclusive, and subsequently, disempowering. By problematizing international development agendas' highly individualistic models I reexamine all-girls' Indian Public Schools as "theaters of empowerment," showing how these discourses are differentially

[16] In this vein, Nussbaum (2000, 2003, 2004) asserts that the concept of capabilities is about allowing room for choice, looking beyond achievements and locating the real freedoms or opportunities an individual has to choose and achieve what she values (Monkman 2011:8).

experienced by students as aligned, merely performative, already attained, unattainable, or as simply a boring or "fatiguing" prospect. As such, this study ultimately suggests the existence of multiple empowerments, and particularly, that empowerment is never an achievable "status" or unidirectional "process" toward some end, as suggested by previous theorists, but learned, adaptable skills or tools (*i.e.* of protocols, practices, performances) enacted in recurring moments of difficulty or contradiction, remade according to social context and cues. So while those like Stromquist (1995:23) have argued that what happens in school can be "the crucial antecedents to empowerment, not empowerment itself," I posit that schools serve as sites for rehearsing gendered mediations, for preparing students for a lifetime of redefining empowerment *in situ*.

All-girls' Indian Public Schools thus serve as "paradoxical tools" (Skinner & Holland 1996:273) or "contradictory terrain" (Sharma 2009), as venues of both empowerment and governmentality, as spaces where the (upper-)middle class female body is emancipated (Najmabadi 1998) yet once again made representative of gendered expectations, discipline, and control. They are scenes for competing discourses and practices, which in some respects mirror inconsistences or conflicts in society at large (Adely 2004). As such, the paths from access to emancipation to empowerment are neither direct nor automatic, but, in many ways false, as they encounter constraints and opportunities internally and externally defined or valued. Education can offer mere *tools* for the understanding and practice of empowerment, not its attainment.

Empowerment in Competitive Times: The (Re)Production of Successful Selves

For many students at these schools today, it is exactly these processes of adjusting to or negotiating the various constraints and opportunities of "becoming" and setting oneself up to

achieve that create experiences of occupying multiple or hybrid subject positions, of "being 600 girls in one." As previously noted, when describing what it means to be a member or product of these institutions, current senior students regularly invoked a language of dichotomies – of the "modern" and "traditional," "Western" and "Indian," "male" and "female," among others – employed by feudal custom as well as projects of colonialism, nationalism, and international development, frameworks purported to civilize, emancipate, and empower but also critiqued as methods of control, hierarchy, and domination.

At times, students used these descriptors as histories and qualities of which to be proud, as achievements of balance uncommon among students at others schools, tied to Indian Public School approaches seeking to bridge these binaries, to create students that are a balance of both and everything in between. However, through their usage in everything from formal mission statements to more everyday speech, these schools and students participate in *reestablishing* their existence and purported separateness. On the other side, this balance, beyond a proposed form of capital and identity, also served as an analogy in students' discussions of how they mediate today's increased competition, examinations of merit, and means of accessing elite higher education alongside persisting gendered expectations in North Indian society. They were descriptors of frustration as much as an identified tool of success in a highly demanding system of evaluation and status conferral. Discussions and definitions of empowerment became subsumed within those of academic achievement as well as those identifying legible forms of female personhood in the realms of education, career, and family.

These tensions experienced by Public Schools and students alike are thought to have emerged, in-part, from "a period of political-economic shift in India that has seen an increasingly complex relationship develop between schooling and social class," one tied to increased

privatization and global consumption practices (LaDousa 2014:4-5). Different policy measures of the Government of India such as Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi's 1973 Pay Commission, Rajiv Gandhi's 1986 efforts to loosen investment and licensing restrictions, and Narasimha Rao's 1991 moves toward liberalizing the economy and privatizing some areas of the government sector are differentially identified as influential. These and other government social policies for educational parity such as the Mandal Commission Report (1980) and the Right to Education Act (2009) that among other things reserve seats in private schools, government jobs, and higher education for specific "classes" of disadvantaged peoples, have also led to a proliferation of private schools, competition, high-stakes standardized examinations, hypercredentialization, and for-profit, Hindi-medium tutoring services. All of these pose challenges to Public School claims to empowerment and privilege. In analyzing the sources, narratives, and outcomes of such institutional anxieties, I submit all-girls' Public Schools are developing ways to balance their want to retain their proposed "essential" character, approach, and clientele with their need to remain competitive and elite in a changing (inter)national education system and its tests of merit, ways that at times prop-up their identities as venues of empowerment and at others undermine them. Additionally, the ways female students engage with, understand, and act in these systems, how they may opt-out of or subvert the education offered within their Public Schools by dropping out, bunking class, prioritizing external private coaching, or employing practices such as rote-memorization, also complicate understandings of class-based resistance and structural (re)production through schooling.

Biological anthropologist, Emily Martin (2000:136) has argued that current cultural shifts associated with neoliberalism are forging new conceptions of "fitness" that are aligned with changes in the kind of person and worker that is seen as desirable in today's rapidly changing

and fiercely competitive world – continuous flexibility is one of those desirable attributes; adaptability, the new competitive advantage. Though students of India's all-girls' Public Schools frequently expressed experiencing too much pressure, stress, and confusion over the decisions, time crunch, and skills necessary to get ahead, their efforts in many ways led many to become highly adaptable to the multiple, sometimes seemingly opposed, requirements of success. Yet this requires a conscious, utilitarian mediation on the part of students. Through an examination of empowerment, success, and education as experience, practice, and discourse (Lukose 2009), of female students' abilities "to create 'syncretic' identities which combine seemingly contradictory 'modern' and 'traditional' themes in complex, textured layers" (Demerath & Mattheis 2012:6), this dissertation argues that though all-girls' Public Schools are often seen as venues of promise for the upwardly mobile and as bastions of the status quo by upper-caste/class families, current pressures have in some ways disrupted Public School prowess to (re)produce capital, at least the kinds deemed necessary in the immediate, leading them to consciously adjust in certain ways. Students too not only have to learn and employ ways of succeeding in overlapping or contrary educational systems but are often posed with engaging in languages, practices, ideals, worldviews, or accepted ways of being that are fitting in school but not always at home. Students and school leaders must learn to mediate these gaps.

Plan of the Dissertation

Following a short essay on research methods that in part considers the reasons for a multi-sited ethnography and a deconstruction of the terms "elite" and "privileged" in the contexts of this project, Chapter 1explores the history and founding missions of North India's all-girls' Public Schools, built out of feudal, colonial, and nationalist discourses that (re)established

dichotomies supporting the gendered and classed balance of combining "the best of the West" and "the best of the East." These narratives were similarly mirrored in the models of female personhood embodied by the schools' founding queens and *memsahibs* in addition to the curricula offered therein. It sets up an argument that while there is a need to question and, at times, discard these binaries as false descriptors or (neo-)imperial categories, not only are these historical constructions imperative to how these institutions still imagine their missions and identities today, but how female students describe, experience, and act in the world, not necessarily through dichotomies of self and other (though this is sometimes the case), but as a mediation of both and everything in between. In particular, it examines how these schools were imagined as stages of emancipation, not necessarily of empowerment.

From here, Chapter 2 questions present day empowerment as access to quality education and its resources by analyzing current Public School demographics as well as admissions policies that determine and weigh class profiles, equality, and merit. I will interrogate how these schools aim to (re)create the female Public School product by who they admit as well as how current national policies for educational parity (*e.g.* The Right to Education Act) and the expanding socio-economic prowess of certain occupational classes are creating moments of institutional resistance to or folding-in of "non-traditional" applicants. Along with Chapter 1, this chapter complicates theories of reproduction and class advantage that suggest the seamless alignment between practices and norms of school and those of (upper-)middle class homes.

Once admitted, Chapter 3 considers student experiences of "empowered discipline" by analyzing how lessons of spatial, temporal, and bodily discipline offered by these Public Schools work to produce both empowered, independent leaders *and* controlled collectives, as well as the paradoxes therein. It questions whether empowered discipline is the ability to opt-in and

reinforce control through notions of responsibility and duty or opt-out and subvert such missions as evidence, not of entitlement, but of independent decision making capabilities, of choosing to opt-out of a system or moment recognized as unbeneficial. In this sense, Public Schools become spaces and times that seek to both empower and control, simultaneously encouraging students to question the status quo but also fall in line.

Chapter 4 then examines the pressures and paths students "choose" in terms of school, Board of Education, Stream, subjects, and exam preparation. It discusses how increased competition and high-stakes examinations have partially de-legitimized the role and approach of Public Schools in terms of their "all-round" education, co-curriculars, and English medium in favor of test prep and methods of rote memorization partly due to the influence of external private tuitions. This chapter assesses how Public Schools are responding and how students, though in some ways disadvantaged by their experiences of stress, confusion, and being overly pressed for time, are differentially acquiring and practicing the various skills necessary to succeed in these systems of evaluation, both academically and socially.

Chapter 5 specifically considers one of these skills – that of using the "right words," those deemed legitimate in different settings or around certain audiences, by further analyzing the Hindi-English "divide." After considering the relationships among varying policies and ideologies concerning the use of these languages (as well as other local vernaculars) in terms of mediums of instruction, discourses of modernity, and global/national/local identities, this chapter examines how Public Schools police and encourage specific language use in addition to the often divergent linguistic practices of students. I will explore how school and popular culture, student body demographics, peer pressure, and even gendered ways of proving "class," "educated-ness," or "coolness" play into these dynamics.

Finally, Chapter 6 offers a discussion of all-girls' Public Schools as theatres of empowerment as well as "empowerment fatigue" (or, at its extremes, symbolic violence) through an examination of school performances and student deliberations over what it means to be empowered as related to choice, future orientations, and school projects of service. It assesses how these schools engage and/or encourage such narratives and the ways in which students define and relate to being empowered.

Ethnographic Methods of Inquiry

"Elite" Networks & Subjectivities: Being Everyone's Some/No One

Throughout my year in the field I attended a number of off-campus social events with various students, teachers, and administrators. Principals, in particular, and especially those from the former feudal schools of MGD, SKV, and Mayo Girls', were frequently invited to workshops, exhibitions, award ceremonies and functions at other schools, and events put on by the local royal family, alumnae, and government officials, often times bringing a few students along to enjoy such events as a Marwari horse show at the Jaipur Polo Club, a sitar performance at the royal palace, and gallery openings at the hillforts' museums. On one such occasion toward the end of her tenure, the Governor of Rajasthan, Margaret Alva, was holding a folk dance performance on the outdoor gardens of the *Raj Bhavan*[17] on International Women's Day. Prior to her governorships, Margaret Alva had spent a significant amount of time from 1974-1998 in the *Rajya Sabha*, India's upper house of Parliament, pushing for greater prominence of women in government especially in official party posts. This included a 1989 proposal calling for 33% of seats be reserved for women in *panchayat raj* [local government] elections that became law in 1993. Needless to say, I was excited to meet and perhaps speak with her about my research. Before the start of the performance as everyone was still mingling around and snacking on the vast spread of *chaats* set-up on one side of the grounds' fountains, an opportunity arose. MGD's principal kindly introduced me and my project, the governor took a second to consider and then said,

[17] The official Governor of Rajasthan's residence in Jaipur.

"You know what you *should* study is the situation of girls in the villages. These are the schools of real interest. What is there to study in those types of schools [referring to MGD]?" and then she was off to greet another of the event's attendees.

Researchers, political figures, media pundits, and alike have often argued that elite institutions like the single-sex, Indian Public Schools are merely "theaters" or "stages" of the unreal, "the illusion of the real (a real that exists nowhere)" (Kumar 2008:88). In India, as elsewhere, the vast majority of research on inequality and schooling has been conducted on the lower classes, lower castes, tribals, rural or urban poor, migrants, religious minorities, etc., on those who either lack access to schooling (*e.g.* due to distance; caste/familial/religious/gendered norms of separation; and inadequate bathrooms, food, or infrastructure) or attend low-quality schools (*e.g.* with high teacher absenteeism, low teacher training or skills, high student-teacher ratios, lack of resources or space, and biased curricula). When applying for research grants, I was even advised to stress certain topics currently deemed "high need" and "low risk" by the Indian government, as many proposals were partially reviewed in-country. Girls' education was one of these topics albeit of again a specifically low-caste/class, rural, government school variety, one that would fit neatly into (inter)national development rhetoric concerning "the plight of the girl child." Such research is in many ways rightly prioritized, admittedly necessary to bring light to the lives and conditions of the disadvantaged so that increased parity may be achieved. However, the role of India's Public Schools in discourses and forms of "quality" schooling and "educated subjects" on the subcontinent, of pedagogy, curricula, language medium, space and building form, textbooks and teachers, routines and rituals, is unquestionably real. Furthermore, as posited by Khan (2011:205):

> [I]n shining light upon elites [we] remind readers that poverty is not an aspect or property of poor people but a relationship that the poor are in with the rest of society. The same

> can be said of elites. Elites are elites not because of who they are but because of who they are in relation to other social actors and institutions. Elites are made.

This builds off of Laura Nader's (1972) well-cited call to "study up" as well as down in anthropology. For not only are institutions like elite schools frequently the venues for the production of elite personhoods, but given the larger, more global presence of India's upper classes in terms of mobility, higher education, employment, technology, media, and popular culture, it is necessary to understand the education offered within these schools as well as the processes, paths, and pressures their students traverse.

Even as studies exist on schooling and inequality (Bourdieu 2001; Willis 1982; Jeffrey, Jeffrey, & Jeffrey 2008, 2010), prestigious boarding schools (Gaztambide-Fernándes 2009; Khan 2011), and even on Public Schools in India (de Souza 1974; Srivastava 1998; Thapan 1991), they primarily focus on male students, all-boys' schools, or a northeastern United States or South Indian, co-ed context. This is a problem. I argue that girls attending northern India's historic all-girls' Public Schools experience, learn, embody, and practice privilege differently. In settings where historic and societal tensions have often made being "female," "educated," and "elite" complex if not contradictory, it is necessary to push anthropological and development literature to be more gender comprehensive and context-specific when dealing with issues of class, schooling, and so-called empowerment. While we will later examine the complexities of naming these schools and girls as "elite," heeding the difficulties of conceptualization, access, and representation (Gaztambide-Fernándes 2009:111), this chapter specifically considers research site selection, the rationale for a multi-sited approach, questions of access and project framing to participants, ethnographic methods undertaken, and a reflection on networks and personal subjectivities.

Though many studies exist that utilize one school as a microcosm for trends arguably generalizable or posed in opposition to others, I argue that such studies are limiting. Through a multi-sited approach of schools with similar structural markers (*e.g.* all-girls', first members of the Indian Public Schools Conference (IPSC), located in northern India), it is possible to focus in on similarities and differences in terms of approach and response to change. Though never completely possible to isolate, a comparative study better allows for an understanding of how regional variations; founding histories, missions, and methods; clientele; and so forth may condition not only the choices made by these schools over the years to alter themselves but also the experiences and responses of students and their families. As such, this research entails an embedded ethnographic study of four, all-girls' "Public Schools" for a complete academic year (July 2013 through June 2014).[18] While MGD was the first established, SKV and Welham Girls' soon followed suit, as metaphorical "sister schools" to former Chiefs' Colleges or the first Indian Public School (MGD to Mayo College, SKV to the Scindia School, and Welham Girls' to the Doon School and Welham Boys' Prep). Mayo Girls', established much later in 1988, eventually became Mayo College's "official" sister school and was included in this project due to its similar feudal history, culture, clientele, and ranking.

The difficulties of gaining access to elite institutions, many times extremely visible but highly protective internally, is well documented. With power comes the ability to decline requests of entrée not to mention appeals for extended stays and allowances of research that questions, plies, and then identifies the institutions by name. "In every instance, researchers who have gained access to elite boarding schools have done so through a complex mobilization of

[18] This time spanned a shifted academic year as U.S. and Indian school calendars do not completely match. North India's school year begins at the start of April, proceeds through mid-May before going on a "summer break," picks up again at the start of July, and concludes at the end of March. As such, I came in to the field after summer break and then overlapped with the start of the next school year in the spring.

social and cultural capital" (Gaztambide-Fernándes 2009:1117). Over the two summers prior to this project while in Jaipur for Hindi language programs, I came in contact with an early alumna of MGD, serving as one of my classmate's host family. She was a retired professor of English yet still an active leader of Rajasthan University's Women's Association (RUWA). Though it wasn't until I was back state-side that I firmly decided upon a dissertation topic, the ex-MGDian suggested I email the principals of each school with a copy of my curriculum vitae and research proposal. As the first established, arguably most changed since its original form, with the largest student body of boarders and day-scholars, and centrally located, I initially hoped MGD would serve as my main field site or hub. I dropped the alumna's name in my email, and whether it was that, my self-proclaimed familiarity with Jaipur, my credentials, or simply the principal's good will or interest, I received a quick response and after conferring with the school's Board of Governors, they agreed to host me for the year.[19] Welham Girls' replied as well but kindly stated that their small campus could only host me for small stints of time while Mayo Girls' did not initially respond at all. SKV, in comparison, did not enter my radar until I was in-country, when after two months on MGD's campus a teacher came to visit, an old friend from when the principal served as SKV's head-of-school and even before, as a teacher at the all-boys' Scindia School. This connection initiated a phone call of introduction to SKV's current principal, setting the dates for my first stay. From here, I was able to include in my introductory emails to Mayo Girls', Welham Girls', and their "brother schools" my already established presence within the Public Schools circuit. This affiliation not only vouched for my person, with a few principals personally emailing or calling MGD to verify my identity and intentions, but created a sort of prestigious "tag" around inclusion in my study. As a project that in a sense "identified" certain schools as "elite" by a U.S. doctoral researcher from an Ivy League university on a Fulbright

[19] I paid a nominal monthly fee for room and board.

scholarship, most schools did not want to be left off the list – elite networks and markers at their best. With MGD as my home base for twelve months, I visited SKV and Mayo each for approximately three weeks in the fall and two weeks in the spring (about a month total), and Welham Girls' for approximately three weeks in the winter.[20]

"The purpose of the ethnographic method is to provide an account of how people live their lives with one another in particular places" (Khan 2011: 201). In this way I engaged in intensive participant observation of the day-to-day lives of these schools and their students, with attention also paid to teachers, administrators, staff, and alumnae (with very limited interaction with parents). In terms of student sampling, I primarily focused on "senior" students from 10th, 11th, and 12th Standard. I also had sizable social interactions with students from the upper-junior classes (*i.e.* 7th, 8th, and 9th Standard) and minimal interaction with lower-junior and primary level students. My heavy use of observations allowed me to compare what people did or said in more everyday settings with what they thought they did or said in interviews, conversations, and surveys, as self-reports of attitudes and behaviors frequently give rise to "the production of highly individualized, socially decontextualized talk" (Ortner 2003:16). Such comparative or triangulated forms of data can only be gained through what Varenne (2007) has called methodological and strategic "hanging out" in comparison to other methods of self-evaluation. This allows insight into school hierarchies (*e.g.* age, Class level, boarder/non-boarder status, etc.), processes of knowledge (re)production and dissemination, school norms and procedures, and the daily structuring of time and space on campuses.

These daily observations mostly took the form of shadowing. Depending on the school and time of year, I would start the day with senior students at their morning physical training

[20] A follow-up spring visit was scheduled but ended up falling through at the last minute due to an unscheduled school closing for a terrorist threat by the Indian Mujahideen followed by unavailable train tickets in later weeks.

(PT), breakfast, and/ or assembly. Breakfast was usually spent sitting with a group of residential teachers, matrons, or House Mistresses while at morning assemblies I often sat off to the side under a nearby tree, alongside students who were late or feigning sickness so they didn't have to stand, or in the front/ back rows with groups of teachers. Following morning assembly, I spent the formal school day conducting some combination of senior classroom observations, mostly in 10th, 11th, or 12th Standard classrooms, divided among different Streams (*i.e.* Commerce, Arts/ Humanities, and Science), where applicable, and subjects, totaling approximately 20 hours per week. During these observations, I would try and sit in a desk at the back corner, noting down pedagogical styles, lesson topics and delivery, assignments, student behavior, seating, language use, and/or engagement. When not in a classroom, I would walk around campus, chatting with students bunking or in between classes, noting down various activities, sitting in the computer lab or library going through archival materials, or talking to teachers in the lounge. This included a mid-day tea break, during which I would either join students as they picked up their snacks and jostled around tuck shops or join a group of senior teachers in the dining hall. After class hours and lunch, I frequently accompanied students engaged in their activities and games period, a prime time for informal conversations and observing peer interactions. Afterwards, I'd connect with students in their Houses for evening tea, homework, relaxation, and gossip. For dinner, I usually sat with students in the dining hall or ate with the principal in her residence in the case of MGD. This was a great time to discuss the happenings of the day in more detail, bouncing off ideas or following up on topics of interest. In terms of documenting these daily observations, I kept an on-going, hand-written journal of field notes including jottings, counts, sketches, long-form reflections, and paraphrased conversations. If moments emerged in the process where I wanted to capture the exact words being used, I'd quickly turn on my voice recorder or ask an

interlocutor to repeat what they had just said. These field notes were later formalized at the end of each day on my laptop including thematic coding.

Within these quotidian observations, I also attended campus functions such as sporting events, cultural performances, religious services and festivals, awards ceremonies, assemblies for visiting dignitaries, study groups, and student council meetings. Faculty meetings, teacher-training workshops, school board meetings, and events for parents also proved informative not only for generational comparisons but "structurally" in order to consider their involvement in interpreting and implementing national, state, or school discourses on pedagogy, testing, success, discipline, all-roundership, etc. Additionally, I served as a chaperone for multiple trips and competitions off-campus including MGD's 11th Standard "educational" trip to Goa and Mumbai; the IPSC Cultural and Literary Festival at Daly College, Indore; trekking in the hills outside of Jaipur; an inter-school marching band competition; and a trip to the movies with boarders; I visited Ajmer's *dargah*[21] while at Mayo Girls'; and a Buddhist temple in Dehradun with Welham Girls'. At all four schools, I attended and participated in various volunteer or service activities including a visit to Mayo's adopted school for disabled children and several Round Square trips that were part-service and part-adventure to local "cultural sites." Throughout the year, I also had the opportunity to visit the homes of students, teachers, and alumnae, as well as engage in more formal social gatherings such as student or sibling weddings and birthday parties.

Outside of school observations, formal interviews were also administered with students, administrators, teachers, alumnae, staff, and school counselors. Fifty-six, one-to-two hour interviews were audio-recorded, largely following a pre-written schedule, and then manually transcribed and thematically coded. Formally interviewed students were equally sampled from

[21] A Muslim shrine built over the grave of a religious figure. *Ajmer Sharif Dargah* is a shrine to the Sufi saint, Moinuddin Chishti.

10th, 11th, and 12th Standard, from all three academic Streams, with balanced representation of boarders and non-boarders, from all four schools. Given the larger portion of time at MGD, a larger proportion of interviews were sampled from this school. In addition to formal one-on-one interviews, this project was supplemented by recorded semi-informal or informal group conversations as well.

While interviews were useful in acquiring an in-depth perspective on participant backgrounds, experiences, and so forth, written student and teacher surveys conducted early on at each school site were extremely helpful in garnering a more complete demographic profile of the schools (*e.g.* age, place of origin, mother tongue, religion, parental occupation, etc. and teacher experience, credentials, and training) as well as in identifying trends in, for example, Stream choice, subjects, daily schedules, parental influence, experiences of stress, success, competition, school identity, private coaching, and future orientations. While some questions offered ranges students or teachers could order in terms of relative "importance" or "significance," most questions were left open-ended. Results from these surveys were manually analyzed through Excel and used to provide statistically significant data, where applicable, and to provide more comprehensive considerations of the diversity of student "voices." As an addendum to MGD's student survey, I asked a few groups of students to map and label (*i.e.* draw) the school's campus in order to investigate matters of spatial representation and importance. Student surveys were conducted either during full class periods or evening study hall in 10th, 11th, and 12th Standard totaling n=1,025 surveys with an average response rate of 95.45%.[22] Because of their close ties, I also made a point to visit each "brother school" for a day or two, interviewing their headmasters, speaking with a few teachers, touring their campuses and museums, observing a few classes, and, primarily, conducting my student survey with a sample

[22] Breakdown of student surveys: MGD (n=330), Mayo Girls' (n=213), SKV (n=240), and Welham Girls' (n=242)

of 10th, 11th, and 12th Standard boys. These surveys served to provide any information regarding possible gendered variations. I also informally visited a few co-ed, day-schools that were diversely if not remotely tied to these schools including the Mayoor School, Ajmer; Maharaja Sawai Man Singh Vidyalaya, Jaipur; St. Xavier's School, Jaipur; and the Doon Girls' School, Dehradun.

Being that a main part of senior students' educational experiences turned out to take place in private coaching or tuition centers, I also found myself accompanying students to observe their lessons, chat with other students, and (in)formally interview instructors and/or the centers' managers. These tuitions took on a variety of types, including locations off-campus in the city or those offered on-campus, in partnership with external providers. They were in rooms lofted above stores in markets, in basements, personal homes, distinct centers or complexes, and classrooms. They were variously jammed with over 60 students to a class, sparsely populated by only five or so students, or took place through e-tuitions, distance correspondence set-ups. Altogether they covered a range of subjects and entrance exams, from accounts, economics, and math to the CLAT (law), IIT-JEE/AIEEE (engineering), AIPMT (medical), and architectural design (NATA/NID/NIFT). Overall, I observed 26 private tuition sessions, each one-to-four hours long.

As mentioned above, I also became great friends with the schools' librarians, alumnae guild attendants, and office administrators as I bugged them to look over various archival materials such as school annuals, prospectuses, (auto)biographies and books on the schools' founders, newspaper/magazine clippings, photos, advertisements, pamphlets, videos, campus and city maps, teaching materials such as lesson plans, textbooks, and assignments; school entrance exams, 10th and 12th Standard Board exam results, student attendance records, cumulative grade

point average (CGPA) data, Right to Education Act lottery notifications, etc. These primary and secondary sources as well as quantitative data provided a view into school histories, founding figures, annual happenings, public branding, and "official" methods of pedagogy and evaluation.

After returning from the field, I was able to keep in touch with informants and up to date through email and social media. By virtually connecting with students, teachers, and administrators, as well as various schools, alumnae, city, and coaching center pages, I remained knowledgeable about school happenings through pictures and updates, and I was able to chat with informants, following up on questions that I may have forgot to ask or if I needed a photo snapped of campus. This also allowed me to keep track of 10th, 11th, and 12th graders as they went on to become seniors, encountered Board and entrance exams, graduated, and moved on to their post-graduate plans. No information from these conversations or updates was taken without the explicit permission of my informants.

This brings us to a brief discussion of ethics and representation, subjectivities and self-reflexivity. Informed consent was received from all participants and schools and the anonymity of participants was insured as best as possible. Aside mainly from principals, whose identities became rather obvious when attached to their schools, all names were changed and in some cases identifying features such as home town, class level, Stream, subject, House, leadership position, physicality, etc. were altered when deemed unessential to the analysis. Upon entry to each school, the principal would formally introduce me to the school community, usually during morning assembly, as a researcher from the U.S., sometimes with mention of my university or discipline, my experiences as a former teacher, my status as a Fulbright scholar, my abilities to speak Hindi, and/or a brief description of my research purpose and their voluntary roles as participants. I made sure throughout the year to continually ask teachers if I could observe their

classes and was always transparent about my topic and the fact that most conversations were fair game for inclusion in my research. This was usually conveyed by my persistent note taking or on occasion by asking informants if I could jot down something quickly or record the conversation. And although there were never any explicit requests made for statements or incidents to remain "off the record," there were occasions where I used my own moral judgement in determining certain topics, conversations, etc. off-limits. Consent was not a one-time engagement, but a continual practice, rooted in trust. I tried to stand by this to the best of my abilities.

Part of building this trust revolved around my perceived identities as being both someone and no one of consequence on these campuses, where I was at once the center of attention, the odd one out, or in other instances a normalized figure of the community. On one side, by the end of the year, administrators, teachers, and students of at least 10 Public Schools knew me in some combination as "that American girl" from Columbia University or "that Fulbright scholar" studying Public Schools or girls' education. As discussed earlier, these identifiers not only served as keys to entrée but as tags of possibility for these schools and their students hoping to take advantage of my supposed connections, networks, information, or skills. I was asked to give presentations on social anthropology, featured in school publications and local newspapers, listed as proof of one school's Round Square "internationalism" requirements, helped coach soccer, and more informally, was asked for advice on topics ranging from applying to colleges, future life decisions, travel, teaching, the English language, boys, etc. However, in more general considerations of my personhood, I found that other, relatively basic, features were usually highlighted. After living at MGD for a few months, for example, the principal confided that when she first approached the school's Board of Governors to seek permission for my research, part of my acceptance was due to the fact that I was a girl and that I wasn't too young or old as

both were imagined to present certain liabilities. Though 28-years old at the time, teachers often expressed thinking I was slightly older than I was while most students thought I was significantly younger, aligning me more closely with their own peer groups. Identifying as female in these contexts also meant I was found non-threatening while still relatable to students of an all-girls' school. Furthermore, the intersectionality of being an *American* woman also meant I could get away with things other girls might not. For example, while everyone was still very protective of me, there was more leeway and trust granted when I travelled off-campus alone, on overnight trains, or when I engaged in conversations with male staff members. In some ways it was easier for me to cross class and gender norms or barriers without judgement. With that said, for most of the year I dressed in *salwar kameez*, matching some of the girls' school uniforms, and also at times utilized my skills in Hindi. Both were mostly met with appreciation and some humor; with several informants commenting on how I was not a complete outsider (*e.g.* "well, you speak Hindi so…," "you like wearing Indian clothes?", or "you're a different type of American"); and reduced occurrences of harassment off-campus.

While on these school campuses, I variously lived in separate accommodations in the principal's residence, in student dorms, teacher accommodations, and in guest houses, I interviewed and hung out with students and teachers, from the upper and lower schools, from different Streams and subjects, with administrators, alumnae, and service staff such as *bai jis*. I tried to be everywhere and interact with everyone as evenly as possible. This was especially important in situations where I lived with the principal or found myself socializing with certain cliques of teachers or students to retain impartiality. To this end, I approached most situations and conversations with curiosity and neutrality as much as possible, often mirroring while still lightly questioning or pushing my informants' explanations and attitudes. I kept individuals'

confidences while still noting that anonymous versions of conversations might appear in my research. Overall, this was not to say I was false or fake in any sense, but consciously and truthfully attempted to exist as someone to confide in with no real horses in any given race.

CHAPTER 1

First Comes Emancipation:
The History & Founding of India's All-Girls' Public Schools

When Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School (MGD) opened its doors in 1943 under the auspices of Jaipur's royal family, it was not as the progenitor of women's education in Rajputana. As with India's other princely states from the mid-19th to the early 20th century convent day schools for girls and a number of Christian missionary-run co-ed schools offered much of the "quality" English-medium education in North India's urban areas. Within certain princely states like Jaipur, progressive Maharajas not only patronized many of these missionary-run schools, setting aside land for their establishment, but even started some of the first Hindi-medium schools for girls. Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II, for instance, was particularly known for his active support of education, establishing Maharaja's College in 1844, Nobles' School in 1862, Sanskrit College in 1865, the School of the Arts in 1866, and the Maharaja's Girls' School in 1867 (Heilig 1968). This pattern of patronage continued with his successor, Sawai Madho Singh II (r. 1880-1922), who created a network of primary and secondary schools spread across Jaipur state. Accessibility, however, has two parts: physical/spatial (*i.e.* distance) and social (*i.e.* class, caste, status, gender, recognition, entitlements, household resources, etc.) (Lindberg 2010); and these schools mostly catered to middle class (and some upper-middle class) families. Cultural beliefs and practices steeped in North Indian patriarchal conservatism concerning caste honor and purity created collective anxieties over the control of female bodies and their access to public spaces, causing most upper caste families to significantly restrict their daughters' access to formal education. Schools like MGD as well as Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya (SKV), Gwalior, established in 1956 and Welham Girls' High School, Dehradun, established a year later in

1957,[23] therefore, opened-up opportunities for girls from these families to leave their homes and receive a certain "type" of education, one "befitting their status" (*MGD Founders' Speech* 1943), contained safely behind the walls of a semi-residential school, taught by all-female, British and Indian faculty. These schools fulfilled a different need – that of educating the daughters of India's aristocracy.

Unequal power distributions are often the result of various acts of exclusion where those privileged in society are allowed access to resources, information, choices, and opportunities unavailable to others. The paradox presented by class society in places like princely India, however, was that it was usually the very girls from the most privileged and powerful high-caste families that experienced such exclusions. Although education by no means guarantees empowerment, *access* to education is frequently posited as the first step (Stromquist 1995). Here, girls' education is seen as essential to "their capacity to question, reflect on, and to act on the conditions of their lives and to gain access to knowledge, information, and new ideas that will help them do so," while certain kinds of education for boys is thought to push the boundaries of long-established patriarchal ideologies (Kabeer 2010:16). To speak of empowerment qua empowerment in a chapter discussing the origins, aims, and ethos of North India's first all-girls' Public Schools, however, is admittedly getting ahead of ourselves, utilizing a language of socio-political agendas not yet in existence; or, as put more succinctly by one early MGD alumna,

"Women's empowerment was not in the air those days. It wasn't talked about so much. But education for women *was*. That was empowerment enough. But going against the grain of [your] parents or [your] husband, well, that was not encouraged. You must *emancipate* girls before you can empower them. Empowerment is a discourse for today's time, for today's girls."

[23] A reminder that Mayo College Girls' School, Ajmer was not founded until 1988 as a sister school to Mayo Boys'

Access to such schools was primarily seen as a way to "gain an identity," "find out who I am," and "gain exposure," sentiments voiced by other early students, albeit not necessarily to become professionals but for marriage marketability in a changing time. Though students took part in revolutionary projects of "becoming somebody," as stated by the speaker at MGD's Platinum Jubilee, it was more often than not a "somebody" who didn't go "against the grain." It is more correct, then, to begin with a consideration of empowerment's supposed precursor, emancipation, through access to resources (*i.e.* formal schooling) and the presentation and negotiation of various situated discourses of "becoming" that this access made available.

The following chapter examines this very project – the conscious curation of the all-girls' Indian Public School, and by association, the constitution of a certain type of "modern Indian woman," the *female* Public School product, similar yet purposefully different from her male counterpart. Specifically, this chapter addresses the following questions: (1) What were the founding purposes, goals, and missions of India's first all-girls' Public Schools; (2) How did these institutional forms reflect the educational and personal histories, philosophies, and female personhoods of the schools' founders; and (3) What were the experiences of the schools' first students with such discourses of emancipation and gendered personhood?

It is in examining these questions that I argue a reconceptualization and application of anthropologist Annette Weiner's (1992) framework of "keeping-while-giving" is useful. Discourses of modernity and citizenship all take place in the spatially- and temporally-bound grounds of class and gender. While much early rhetoric of the Chiefs' Colleges aimed to convert all that was "Indian" and therefore backward to "Western" (*i.e.* modern and rational) by erasing the supposed effeminacy of Indian men through a separation from ritual, religious orthodoxy, and tradition, the seat of which was imagined as the home and the female, girls were

immediately tasked with balancing both – of becoming emancipated and modern without becoming "overly Western." Even the IPSC, which proclaimed to bridge the Western and the Indian, purposefully recruited male headmasters and teachers straight from England for its boys' schools, wanting untainted representatives of liberal education and its ideological counterpart of intellectual manliness. In this way, Indian Public Schools served as "indispensable adjuncts" to embodying and defining 19th century discourses of British liberalism, veiled by colonial agendas of subjugation that undermined notions of liberty, equality, freedom, and individualism, in addition to a newly forming "Indian" liberalism (Srivastava 1998:7), both couched in different yet mutually (re)constructed systems of patriarchy and class privilege. Upper-caste/class women and girls, as the receptacles and symbols of Indian culture, the community, family honor, and prestige, consequently became the safeguards of these intangibles, "the representation of how social identities are reconstituted through time" (Weiner 1992:11).

In reference primarily to the qualities of actual material commodities, Weiner (1992:6) introduces the concept of "inalienable possessions" as that which is "imbued with the intrinsic and ineffable identities of their owners which are not easy to give away." They "are embedded with culturally authenticating ideologies…imbued with history composed of their own exceptional trajectories and the beliefs and stories that surround their existence" (*ibid.*:150). In contradistinction to previous anthropological analyses of the norm of reciprocity and exchange, she argues that it is "not the hoary idea of a return gift that generates the thrust of exchange, but the radiating power of keeping inalienable possessions out of exchange" (*ibid.*) that matters. The figure of the upper-class/caste Indian woman in its various historic and socio-political iterations takes on similar forms of ownership, not just as "objects" or commodities of exchange within patriarchal systems but as individuated and agentive "subjects" engaged in kept discourses of

power, the gendered self, and modernity. I argue that it is this inherent tension of "keeping-while-giving" that mirrors 19th and 20th century narratives concerning "the woman question," tensions at play in early women's organizations as well as later women's movements, in social reform for education and women's rights. It is how the first all-girls' Indian Public Schools came to serve as venues representative of change yet veiled as stasis as well as their opposites in order to assuage simultaneous anxieties over loss and progress, preservation and development.

By detailing the founding principles/als, players, norms, values, and aims of these four, archetypal schools, I comparatively analyze the complex frameworks (*i.e.* school structures, curricular forms, and practices) that organized institutional ideologies and student experiences of identity, acquisition, loss, and mediation. The first section spends time detailing the familial and educational histories of the schools' founders – a "Westernized" Indian queen who considered upper-caste girls' schooling a way to erase backwards customs such as *purdah;* an "orthodox" queen who somewhat conversely sought to reestablish a lost Indianness by educating girls in tradition and duty; and British women on the subcontinent, educationalists and reformers in their own right – as they enunciated their own negotiations of "modern (Indian) womanhood." Such details set the grounds for understanding the visions behind their establishment of India's all-girls' Public Schools in the next section, as locations for both the reification *and* contestation of discursive caste-based and imperial tools of governance frequently rooted in a language of dualisms that differentiated the "West" from the "East," male from female, modern from traditional, outer from inner, and the self from other. From these foundations in the contradictions of feudalism, colonial modernity, and the various platforms of "Indian" nationalism, the last section situates their emergence alongside the post-independence policies and rhetoric of a paternalistic development state often ambivalent to women's roles beyond the

domestic. It is within these socio-political interactions that I posit founders, students, and the schools themselves began their engagement with idioms and practices of conscious mediation, of interrogating the status quo while striving to exist "successfully" and legibly in a multitude of local-national-global contexts, of learning various socio-structural cues and protocols to the "modern" as performative and processual. It is here I suggest that enactments of "keeping-while-giving" persist, altered in form yet similarly situated among hierarchies of class and gender-based power.

A Story of Founders: Two Queens and a British *Memsahib*

Coming from the princely families of Baroda in the West (now Gujarat) and Cooch Behar in the Northeast (now West Bengal), Gayatri Devi, or Ayesha as she was better known by those closest to her, named after the all-powerful white queen in Rider Haggard's novel *She*, lived a life arguably representative of the Indian-British, feudal-colonial-nationalist encounter, situated at the discursive nexus of differential modernity and the construction of "educated" upper-class/ caste Indian womanhood. Baroda and Cooch Behar were known as the Indian subcontinent's more "progressive" princely families, though this presented in very distinct or somewhat opposed formulations, highly dependent on their relationships with the British (as well as other European elite circles) and their attending expectations for royal women. Gayatri Devi describes her Maratha grandfather, the Gaekwad of Baroda,[24] as a man ahead of his time, seen most clearly in his stance on women's education and divorce. The Gaekwad hired tutors for his wife to teach her to read and write, encouraging her to "free herself from suffocating Indian traditions and

[24] One of only five rulers who were entitled to a 21-gun salute by the British at ceremonial occasions including the Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Maharaja of Mysore, and the Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir

pursue a role in public life" (Devi 1995:8). Gayatri Devi posits that it was because of his "liberal views" that her grandmother became an important leader in the women's movement in India, as the president of the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) established in 1927, concerned with the emancipation of women through the spread of education, and author of a book on the conditions of women in Indian society (*ibid.*). It was often these progressive princely state's stances toward women's education and upliftment as well as women's involvement in organizations like the AIWC that came to undermine the colonial state's claims as sole "modernizer" of India's "social" problems (Sinha 2006). Gayatri Devi recalls that though the Baroda palace, Laxmi Vilas, was formally arranged in the traditional manner, having two separate wings and entrances for men and women, the *mardana* and *zenana*, she never felt confined as strict *purdah* was not followed by her grandparents. Instead, the palace was a "blend of styles, partly Victorian, partly traditional Indian" (*ibid.*:5).

> It is astonishing, when I think back on it, that these two people, brought up in such a tradition-ridden atmosphere, married in the customary way by an arrangement between their elders, should have become leaders of change and reform, encouraging new and more liberal ideas into an orthodox society. (*ibid.*:15)

For all their "liberalism," however, Gayatri Devi notes that it was not a "total transformation" for any of them – her grandmother, her mother, or even for herself and her two sisters – as within the family and palace they "still retained much of the conventional manners and the sense of propriety of all Indian households" (*ibid.*:8).

Indira Gaekwad of Baroda, Gayatri Devi's mother, was one of the first Indian princesses to leave the palace home to go to school and college, accompanying her parents on their trips to England and briefly attending a school in Eastbourne. At the age of 18, Indira was arranged to be married to the Maharaja of Scindia in Gwalior, who like Baroda was one of the most important

Maratha states in princely India (*ibid.*:20). Unhappy with the arrangement as the Scindia was not only 20-years her senior but was known for being very conservative, requiring the practice of strict *purdah* within and without the Gwalior palace, she soon met and fell in love with the Maharaja of Cooch Behar at the 1911 Delhi durbar held to crown King George V. Considered quite the scandal at the time, Indira's parents strongly opposed not only the breaking of an engagement to such a high status Maratha family as the Scindias, but also an arrangement with Cooch Behar, a less important princely family known for their "unorthodox and wild behavior" (*ibid.*:28).

> [T]he Cooch Behar family was Westernized in a way of which [the Gaekward] strongly disapproved. They led a purely "social" life, mixing with Edwardian society and entertaining streams of Western guests, ranking from royalty downwards, at home in Cooch Behar. (*ibid.*)

Geographically, Cooch Behar was an important strategic location for the British's expansionist schemes in the East, with access to Bhutan, Sikkim, Assam, Nepal, and Tibet, and as such, their intervention into the affairs of the princely state and the education of its rulers had long been established. Indira's eventual father-in-law had English tutors since a young age, was sent to England for his education, and was married to Suniti Devi, daughter of Brahmo Samaj leader, Keshub Chandra Sen, founder of the women's organization, Arya Nari Samaj, who similarly worked for women's emancipation in Bengal while curiously still living in the *zenana* quarters of the Cooch Behar palace (*ibid.*:33). Being that Indira's parents did not attend the wedding, she married the Maharaja of Cooch Behar in London accompanied by her mother's English companion, Miss Tottenham, and a lawyer (*ibid.*:30). When she later returned, arriving at her new palace in an open-air car, "*purdah* suddenly ended – except, of course, for the billiards-room," or so Gayatri Devi (1995:33) romantically opined.

Gayatri Devi herself was born the fourth out of Indira's five children in London 1919. A self-proclaimed "tomboy," fond of playing tennis and badminton, riding horses, and shooting, her childhood and adolescence was spread across Cooch Behar, Calcutta, Darjeeling, Ooty, Baroda, England, France, and Switzerland, among other locations. Education was consistently at the center of her life growing up, experiencing a vast array of educational forms including single-sex and co-ed learning environments; home schooling, day schools, and residential schools; and various mediums including Bengali, English, and French. During her younger years in England, she received lessons from her British governesses, Miss Oliphant and Miss Hobart; and upon returning to India, was home schooled in the Cooch Behar palace with her brothers and sisters. These lessons were organized into regularly timed periods marked by different subjects, their "school" day consisting of Miss Hobart teaching them English, English literature and history, and some French, and two Bengali tutors relaying lessons on mathematics, Indian history, Bengali, and Sanskrit (*ibid.*:54). In the decade following her father's death, Gayatri Devi continually traveled abroad and back to India with her mother, siblings, and cousins, receiving a formal education at institutions such as a day school in Glendower, London; Les Noisetiers near Leysin, Switzerland; Tagore's Shantiniketan in Calcutta at the age of 15; the Monkey Club finishing school in London;[25] Brillantmont finishing school in Lausanne, Switzerland; and finally at the London College of Secretaries.

It was particularly during this last stint in London, that Gayatri Devi expressed feeling as though she were "leading a sort of double life" (*ibid.*:130). It was a life that required balancing not only the gender expectations of feudal India and the European metropolis but attending class

[25] "The long-defunct Monkey Club in London's Pont Street is remembered by many ex-debutantes as the epitome of traditional finishing, where, from before the Second World War, upper-class young gels [sic] learned domestic arts, the rudiments of typing, and generally how to behave in Society. It got its name because students were taught to 'hear no evil, see no evil'. It was also a place where foreign aristocrats came to learn English and 'have a bit of fun'" (Gerard, 1996).

expectations as well – on one side she was being prepped for palace luxury, an arranged high-status marriage, princely social work and patronage, and hosting parties while on the other side being trained for a suitable job in the public sphere. Whereas in India or among family she was known as Princess Ayesha, for the six hours of the day spent at school in London, she was known as "Miss Devi":

> I wore Western clothes, travelled by bus and underground, and could say in all honesty that I liked doing something concrete, liked working regularly and hard in a kind of school and in company of a sort that I had never known before [girls from working-class families]. I liked the absolutely practical, in-touch-with-ordinary-daily-life atmosphere in which we worked. Occasionally, one or another of them asked me out to tea.… I can remember my embarrassment when I had an interview with the Principal and was asked whether I would like to be a secretary to a doctor, a politician, or an artist. Thinking as fast as I could to cope with this serious and well-intentioned questioning, I said that I didn't actually need a job in this country at all. (*ibid.*:130)

In the evenings, since many of her English friends were "out" (*i.e.* identified as available for marital courtships), she would accompany them to restaurants, nightclubs, or "one of the many cocktail or dinner parties or balls" given in their honor (*ibid.*:129-30). Gayatri Devi, herself, used this time abroad to stall any marriage arrangements made on her own behalf back in India as she hoped to convince her mother to allow her to marry the Maharaja of Jaipur, His Highness Man Singh II, whom she had been secretly meeting since their first introduction a few seasons prior. Though Indira eventually gave her approval, similar to the anxieties experienced over her own broken marriage arrangements to the Scindia, she worried over her daughter who was used to moving freely about London, wore pants, and had a stylishly short haircut becoming the *third* wife of a Maharaja from a comparably conservative state in which all upper-caste women observed strict *purdah*. Little did she know that the Maharaja had already begun discussing with

Gayatri Devi the role her presence could play in slowly eradicating the practice among Jaipur's upper-caste women. It was in this vein that the future Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School would be established.

Figure 4 (*left*) Maharani Gayatri Devi in her office
Figure 5 (*right*) Maharani Gayatri Devi on horseback on the Jaipur Polo Grounds

Originally from the Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh) in Sagar, Vijaya Raje was born Lekha Divyeshwari to a Rajput family hailing from the Ranas of Nepal. "The Ranas scoffed at book learning," she states, continuing:

> Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century there was not a single school in the whole of their kingdom. The male offspring, such as my grandfather, were given a rudimentary education and, on the whole, taught to speak English by family tutors recruited from Bengal. But such an education was a male privilege, and the general attitude toward literacy was one of disapproval mixed with contempt, as bearing the taint of such non-martial classes of Nepalese society as priests or shopkeepers. The very thought of educating a Rana girl would have sent shockwaves through the clan councils. Who would ever marry such an oddity when, as it was, they were finding it necessary to send scouts even deeper into India to look for bridegrooms of the requisite lineage and to agree to extortionate dowries! (Scindia & Malgonkar 1988:16)

Vijaya Raje suggests that the only reason her mother received any education at all in this environment, locked "in the teeth of such prejudice," must be attributed to the *memsahibs* of Sagar and their influence on her grandmother, Dhankumari Devi, who "represented both glamour and emancipation" (*ibid.*). After many talks with his wife, Khadga Shamsher eventually agreed to his daughter's education while stipulating that instead of sending her to the local school which would be against any kind of decorum she would employ a set of private tutors at home. From here, after becoming the first Nepalese girl to pass the matriculation exam, Vijaya Raje's mother "wore down her parents' opposition" and gained admission to the Isabella Thoburn Women's College in Lucknow, living in a rented bungalow staffed with Sagar servants (*ibid.*:17). Following soon after, arrangements were made for her marriage to an educated, but not overly rich, Deputy Collector, Thakur Mahendra Singh. It was only after the arrangements had been set, gifts exchanged, and preparations set in motion, however, that they discovered various points of deception that pointed to the Thakur only being interested in the wealth of the Ranas.[26] Despite these suspicions, the marriage continued and true to the prophecies that came with the rereading of their horoscopes, Vijaya Raje's mother died nine days after her daughter's birth, resulting in Vijaya Raje being raised in Sagar by her Rana grandmother (*ibid.*:19).

As there were no schools exclusively for girls in Sagar at the time and as her grandmother was "brought up in a society which regarded schools as plebian institutions," Vijaya Raje's early education began at home where she received private tuitions in Hindi, English, geography, history, and mathematics (*ibid.*:25-6). Years later, she was sent to the Besant Women's College near Benaras following the advice of her father's friend, "a well-known proponent of women's

[26] The Thakur was, in fact, already married to a wife in good health with children and the astrologers had originally read their horoscopes incorrectly, claiming theirs aligned when in fact they were "wholly mismatched" (Scindia & Malgonkar 1988:19).

emancipation" and follower of the school's namesake, Annie Besant (*ibid.*:39). One of the leaders of the theosophical movement in India whose founding principles were based on various tenets of Hinduism, Besant was a British women's rights activist, Fabian socialist, and supporter of Indian home-rule with connections to the likes of writer, George Bernard Shaw; educationalist and Indian nationalist, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya; and Mahatma Gandhi. Used to the feudal fineries and Rajput customs that defined her life in Sagar – a grand house, countless servants, silk *saris*, jewelry, decadent meals including various meat dishes, daily *pujas*, and exclusionary/ separationist principles per class and gender – life at the college and within its hostels required a sizable adjustment on the part of Vijaya Raje. Or as she put it in her autobiography, "[F]or all its preoccupation with liberalism, [the school] was stiff with its own orthodoxies," as most of the students were followers of the theosophical movement, committed to vegetarianism, plain living, freedom of thought, and universalism (*ibid.*:41). During this time, Vijaya Raje gave up wearing her preferred imported *saris*, became a vegetarian, and began her foray into a certain type of nationalist politics, adding a picture of *Bharat Mata* to her prayer alcove alongside her idol of Krishna:

> This had been a major sacrifice. But sacrifice was in the air; it was, in some undefined way, inseparable from the national struggle. It showed that you belonged. The more you gave up, the more patriotic you were. So I conformed. Unlike others from my background, I turned away from Western society and embraced Hindu mores of behaviour. I avoided clubs, tea-dances and cocktail parties. I disapproved of the drinking of alcohol, a practice I associated with the white rulers, and took to a wholly vegetarian diet. (*ibid.*:48)

Her childhood family experiences and two years at the Besant Women's College (as well as the short stint afterward at the college her mother attended, Isabella Thoburn Women's College, Lucknow) had lasting effects on how Vijaya Raje defined her approach to politics and

religiosity, her marital arrangements, her familial and public life, and, eventually, her views on upper-class/caste girls' education, its purposes and form, as well as its connections to concepts of modernity and tradition, the Western and Indian, approaches which in many ways oriented her in ideological opposition to those like Maharani Gayatri Devi. [27]

For one, within many of Vijaya Raje's early marriage proposals existed the by now common anxieties over one family or the other being "too Westernized" or "too orthodox." When talks began considering her marriage to the Maharaja of Tripura's younger brother, for instance, Vijaya Raje stressed what she saw as misalignments between Manikya family "custom" and her own through such descriptions:

> The Manikyas were educated at public schools of the British pattern and were well-travelled. They excelled in outdoor games, were connoisseurs of European art and music and they prided themselves on being highly Westernized. They were bright and fun and fully at home in the social whirl of Calcutta, where they maintained a splendid town house. They entertained lavishly and took their guests to hunt wild buffalo and tiger in their preserves. While the guests danced the rhumba or the tango on the polished teakwood floor of the dance pavilion of the Vijayanta Palace, the tribal drum picked up the beat of the surrounding forest. (*ibid.*:52)

With that said, Vijaya Raje goes on to state that while her uncle and grandmother were having second thoughts over "arranging the match between a young man who was altogether too Westernized, and someone like [herself], brought up in strict Hindu orthodoxy," she had considered the possibility that perhaps she was "marked by destiny to transform this deep-dyed product of British imperial culture into a properly committed freedom fighter" (*ibid.*:56). Such thinking was for naught, however, as her uncle eventually dissolved all talk of marriage with the Manikyas upon hearing of the recent dissolution of the Maharaja of Gwalior's own marital

[27] Vijaya Raje also describes her experiences with college and hostel life's extra-curricular activities such as athletics and the arts (*e.g.* cultural programs, plays, and music lessons) as wholly engaging and enjoyable.

arrangements. Finding the Scindia's views and "way of life" amenable to that of his niece, he proposed their alliance which was accepted after some time. As the first non-Maratha bride of a Scindian maharaja, Vijaya Raje (which became her name upon her marriage as per Scindian custom) embraced the world of her husband "which was his by inheritance, its disciplines and orthodoxies…a world rooted in tradition," by practicing "a sensible sort of *purdah*" (*ibid.*:132). Though more restrictive than what she was used to growing up in Sagar as she was not permitted to be seen in Gwalior itself, causing her to travel around in tinted cars and sit behind curtains at public events, she did not have to veil and "could go about freely, speak to and joke with the menfolk" within the premises of the palace and did not have to observe *purdah* at all outside their state (*ibid.*).

Though as maharani she ended up foregoing much of the "plain living" practiced in her college years for "practical reasons" of appropriate queenly decorum, Vijaya Raje integrated these views in her political leanings, the raising of her children, and her views on education (*ibid.*:148). When it came time to locate nannies and a suitable tutor for the education of her older children, for example, she stated that an American governess, Mrs. Norma Shastri, who was trained in the Montessori method of teaching, and a nurse, Sister Betty Castelion, were rare finds as they balanced indulgence with discipline (*ibid.*:168). Unlike her grandmother who saw the British *memsahibs* as representative of female emancipation and gentility, Vijaya Raje viewed many of them as frivolous (*ibid.*).

Figure 6 (*left*) Vijaya Raje Scindia in her home in Sagar, 1940s
Figure 7 (*right*) Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia of Scindia

Dissimilar from the many upper-class *memsahibs* who came to India accompanying their high ranking husbands, others, especially those of middle- or working-class background, came as social reformers in the capacity of missionaries and/or educationalists. Like some of the rhetoric around Anglo-Indian men, these women often found themselves participants in identity discourses concerning their "Indianness" or "Britishness." Differentiated from British *memsahibs* who were "othered," these Englishwomen having sometimes spent decades on the subcontinent occupied a kind of middle ground, wishing to modernize and bring about progress but with respect to Indian customs and traditions. Hersilia Susie Oliphant, young Gayatri Devi's English governess in London and Cooch Behar, was such a figure. Arriving in Cooch Behar in 1920, Miss Oliphant remained in India well into the 1970s, taking charge of an industrial home for women, becoming Secretary and Captain of the Bhopal Girl Guides, and working as principal of the S.P.G. Anglo-Vernacular School in Kanpur, as vice principal of Queen Mary's High School, Delhi, and as "dame" at the Doon School and Col. Brown's School, Dehradun. It was here that

she later founded Welham Boys' School as a preparatory school for the Doon School and Welham Girls' School in 1957 with the help of another British educational reformer on the subcontinent, Miss Linnell, who, similar to MGD's first principal in Miss Lutter, utilized her time and experiences on the subcontinent to try and create an all-girls' school that was equally "modern" while rooted in Indian "traditions."

Figure 8 (*left*) Miss Oliphant of Welham Girls'
Figure 9 (*right*) Miss Linnell in her office at Welham Girls'

In the figures of Gayatri Devi and Vijaya Raje (as well as in the female relatives that came before them) there is conscious mediation of working to belong in various spheres defining their "Indianness" or levels of "Westernization," or in the case of women like Miss Oliphant, their "Britishness" or levels of "Indianization." Spheres such as the palace home, school, and the public arena (*e.g.* on trains, at cricket matches or the theater, while shopping in the markets, etc.), both in India and abroad, became spaces for negotiating the expectations of a "modern" or a/n "traditional/orthodox" upper-class (Indian) womanhood. This separation, constructed largely out of the colonial-national encounter, not only appears repeatedly in the queens' descriptions of certain individuals, families, practices, and ideologies, but in their own narratives of "keeping-

while-giving," of learning to "keep" certain customs, traditions, practices, decorum, etc. expected of your gender and class/caste, while "giving" way to and integrating change as per the expectations of the time. Many of these moments of self-reflection, of feeling as though they were leading a sort of "double life," as expressed by Maharani Gayatri Devi, arose particularly within their schooling experiences. Their education received outside the home, the exposure to new ideas, skills, and ideologies, to different "types" of people, matriculation exams, and extra-curriculars, played a central role in their decisions to later open schools and the forms they would take.

Vijaya Raje's life was in many ways tied to that of Gayatri Devi, in feudal marriage arrangements, the place of princely families and their privileges in the politics and governance of an independent nation, as canvassing representatives of political parties and imprisoned cellmates in Tihar jail during Indira Gandhi's Emergency, in dealing with the realities of change. Their processes of "becoming somebody" involved trials of belonging, of mediating their encounters with the feudal and the colonial. For Vijaya Raje, this often emerged in counter distinction to "others from [her] background" who embraced Western society and turned away from Hindu "mores of behaviour" (Scindia & Malgonkar 1988:48). In this category of "other," she placed those such as Gayatri Devi of Cooch Behar and princely families such as the Manikyas from Tripura and the Gaekwads of Baroda, those with a certain proximity to the British and their "way of life." In detailing the mismatched and broken arrangement of her father-in-law to Gayatri Devi's mother, Indira, in her memoire, Vijaya Raje comments on how:

> …the cultural gap between the two was [wide]. He was rooted in tradition, in the cult of masculine superiority, and he was a believer in *purdah*, the seclusion of women behind veils or at least in a part of the house exclusively set aside for them. She was outspokenly 'modern,' having attended a co-educational school in Baroda and spent a year at a

> finishing school in Eastbourne. She sometimes wore European clothes and even went to dances, behaviour which would have outraged Gwalior's sardars. (*ibid.*:117-8)

These "types" of families attended Public Schools along the British model, travelled abroad often, attended parties and dances, and went on tiger hunts. In this, Vijaya Raje understood her own Indianness to be superior and comparably untainted by the colonial encounter, made evident in her felt sense of divine duty to "rehabilitate" the Manikyan prince, to transform the "deep-dyed product of British imperial culture" into a freedom fighter, recovering his lost martial manliness. This resembles several tropes of Indian womanhood throughout the feudal and colonial periods, with which Vijaya Raje would have been familiar given her admitted experiences growing up in an orthodox Rana household and her personal interests in the devotional *bhajan*s of the 15th century Rajput princess, Mirabai (Scindia & Malgonkar 1988:27). Within these narratives, the upper-caste Rajput woman, embodying family, caste, and male honor, sacrifices herself, safeguarding honor, so that her husband may be emboldened to fight. Vijaya Raje similarly verbalizes how marrying a more "westernized" man would be a sacrifice she was willing to make, marked by destiny to restore her future husband's true Indianness as a freedom fighter. Such narratives of Indian womanhood were also picked up by certain strands of the nationalist movement as represented by Gandhi (and Subhas Chandra Bose in a more militant fashion). Gandhi often employed figures such as Parvati, Sita, and Mirabai to mobilize women's participation in the nationalist struggle, interpreted as an extension of traditional and familial roles, through embodiment of the *pativrata*'s devotion to husband and self-sacrifice at home (Taneja 2005:51). For Gandhi, the feminine symbolized the virtues of sacrifice, of passive, non-violent resistance, and linked the nationalist movement to the home (*ibid.*:52). Much of this thinking became integrated in the practices and mission of the Besant Women's College, which

Vijaya Raje (1988:48) depicts by stating, "…sacrifice was in the air; it was, in some undefined way, inseparable from the national struggle. *It showed that you belonged. The more you gave up, the more patriotic you were.* So I conformed." That which was given up became attached to that considered western (and frequently, anti-Hindu) – imported products, alcohol, and meat. As the princely and upper classes were most exposed to these products, Vijaya Raje often expressed dividing pulls between her feudal self (its martial practices and imported fineries) and her plain living, nationalist ideologies, as she located in both elements of a true Indian identity. This can be seen in her want to give her children a "middle class" experience separate from the indulgences of palace life,[28] yet also in her struggle with a sense of lost Indian culture, custom, and tradition in the aftermath of independence which saw the disbanding of feudal privileges. It was in these hopes of reconciling such change whilst rehabilitating a drifting Indian heritage that Vijaya Raje envisioned a school for upper-caste girls in Gwalior, Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya.

In many ways, the same can be said of Gayatri Devi and Miss Oliphant as well. Their reasons for establishing their schools, their visions (*i.e.* whether to emancipate, modernize, or revitalize a sense of tradition and heritage in India's girls) as well as their decisions regarding how, for whom, and by whom, emerged not only from their own experiences and beliefs regarding education and "modern Indian womanhood," but from a sensed onus to prepare India's upper class/caste girls for a newly independent nation and a changing environment. To the outside world, these schools as well as the figure of the MGDian, SKVian, and Welhamite became emblems of female emancipation and solutions to "the woman question," evidence of national progress as well as the supremacy of Indian culture.

[28] Vijaya Raje somewhat amusingly describes this has an "anomalous" task as her children learned to ride horses that their parents owned and had the "run of a well-equipped riding school and the services of skilled riding instructors," but were forced to ride only bareback at first so they could learn to ride "the hard way" (1988:168).

Visions of Female "Re-Awakening"

The Opening of Schools, their Aims, and Leading Women

At the time of Gayatri Devi's arrival as Maharani, Jaipur was considered the conservative capital of princely India. In Rajputana, *purdah* was still ritually observed, requiring all upper-caste women to veil and persist unseen and unheard within the *zenanas* of royal palaces and *thikanas* [estates]. However, Man Singh II was seen as one of Jaipur's most progressive rulers, building schools, hospitals, and roads across the state. After his adoption as heir apparent to Madho Singh II, he attended Mayo College, Ajmer, in addition to several prep and boarding schools in Europe including the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. An avid sportsman playing professional polo and airplane pilot, he often travelled abroad becoming active in Europe's elite social scenes, regularly appearing in the gossip columns of newspapers not only in London but in Paris and New York City as well (Singh & Singh 2005). As such, it was decided that upon her arrival to Jaipur as queen, Gayatri Devi would observe *purdah* for about a year in order for her to be accepted among Rajputana's ruling families and aristocracy, and then slowly they would discern methods of relaxing and eventually removing the practice completely, not only for the maharani herself but for all of Jaipur's nobility. Together they determined the most promising route to "emancipation" was through girls' education, and a particular type of education *outside* the home at that. As Maharani Gayatri Devi (1995:208-9) tells it:

> Before our marriage Jai [Man Singh II] had told me that he hoped I would encourage the women of Jaipur to come out of *purdah* to at least some small degree. We both knew that the deep-rooted customs of centuries could not be erased overnight….He had tried giving parties to which he invited the state officials and ministers, asking them to bring their wives, but very few women came….It occurred to me that perhaps one way of beginning the long task of emancipation was to start a school for girls…primarily for the daughters

of the noble families and the higher echelons of society, because it was their womenfolk who observed the rules of *purdah* most strictly.

At the time, a few single-sex, missionary schools and those established by the late Maharaja of Jaipur existed for those in the middle-classes who lived close enough, were willing to travel, and/or were keen on engaging in Hindi-medium courses or an English-medium education taught by Christians. Even among the middle-classes, though, many families preferred sending sons over daughters to school as some considered the long distances unsafe or inappropriate for girls to travel, or that as the supposed bearers of Indian tradition, religiosity, and domesticity as well as caste and family honor, girls were highly susceptible to taint by "Western" ideas. The pervasiveness of the *purdah* system resulted in the majority of upper-caste women, with the exception of those being educated by personal tutors or governesses in their homes, receiving very little "schooling." One MGD alumna recalled the existence of only one girls' school in Jaipur during her aunts' childhood in the early 1900s and the tactics engaged in order to convince such families to send their daughters,

"When my aunts went to this Maharaja's School, girls' school, at that time they were lured by four *laddoos* [besan flour sweets] and five small *cordhian* [conch shells]. At that time that was the currency… *cordhian*. *Paunch* [five], *paunch*, *cordhian*; small, small, shells; and four *laddoos* and girls were lured to come to study in the school. Can you imagine?"

Sitting with Prerna, another of MGD's first students, in the school's Guild Office one afternoon, she described her experiences as an upper-caste girl in northern India, of certain practices and restrictions on girls' education, as region-specific,

"I grew up in *purdah*. You know, we weren't allowed to go out in the *bazaar*. And you see, I'm just talking…there are society structures. I'm not saying that one is better than the other.

It depends on what you're born in. So…particularly girls in Rajasthan and other parts of India, not in the South or in Bengal – in Bengal they were educated; in Kerala they were educated – but in our state, in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, [upper-caste girls grew up in *purdah*]. I'm a Rajput, but come from Uttar Pradesh, so my aunts were educated, but, in Rajasthan your mothers never went to school and there was no place for you to go because the social thing was that you should not be seen in public. So, where do you go to school?! There was no question. And people who were teaching were all male teachers. Yea, because women were not educated! So they couldn't come and teach you. They could come and teach your brother, give tuitions, but education was not for girls, across the board. Across the board! It's not just [a] rich or poor [matter]. [Education for girls] was not considered good. The social thing was that they'll get too smart and they'll make their demands, they'll do this, they'll do that. So, the best [thing] is to keep them where they were…. So that was the situation, scenario, till the Rajmata [Maharani Gayatri Devi], who was educated abroad. And she comes from Cooch Behar, Bengal. Women were more emancipated [there] and her mother eloped! Can you imagine?"

In this explanation, Prerna offers that anxieties over female personhood that limited girls' access to education in northern India not only reflected upper-caste concerns but restrictions felt by most girls regardless of social standing. Practices such as *purdah* that constrained girls' movement through public spaces and the difficulties of finding educated female teachers whose pedagogical approaches and curricula were deemed non-threatening, were also complicated by apprehensions over the overall purpose or possible outcomes of girls' education.

It was in this atmosphere and in dialogue with such concerns that Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School was envisioned. His Highness, Maharaja Man Singh II summoned his Prime Minister, Sir Mirza Ismail, and Jaipur's Education and Finance Minister, Rao Bahadur Amarnath

Atal, to allot land and make ready plans for such a school. At its inauguration in 1943, temporarily situated in the *zenana* of Madhovilas Gardens while the school's main building was constructed, in front of an audience consisting of the school's 24-students and their parents, various dignitaries, and a Brahmin *pandit*, Maharani Gayatri Devi declared the school open. Its first students included Jaipur's princess, Prem Kumari (from Maharaja Man Singh II's first marriage), as well as the daughters of various other princely families, *sardars*, high officials, and elite business families.

Figure 10 First MGD students at Madhovilas, 1943

The school's sense of purpose was made known through the various speeches and newsletters of the day that claimed the school's opening "marked the re-awakening of womanhood in Rajasthan" (*Silver Jubilee Souvenir* 1968). The headline of one special news supplement issued by the Information Bureau, Jaipur on July 4, 1943, read, "Mile-stone on Forward March: Education of Daughters of Jaipur State," while another that day announced the

opening of Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School as a "fillip to girls' education," commemorating "an epoch in the history of women's education in Jaipur."

Jaipur News-Letter
July 4, 1943

Fillip to Girls' Education in Jaipur

Inauguration of Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' High School

Her Highness Performs Opening Ceremony

The opening, by Her Highness Shree Maharani Gayatri Deviji, of the new Girls' High School associated with her honoured name, *marks an epoch in the history of women's education in Jaipur.*

The inaugural ceremony took place this afternoon, in the presence of a small gathering which included prominent educational officers of the State as well as the parents or guardians of the pupils. The School is temporarily situated at the Madhovilas Gardens in a very healthy locality outside the Amber Gate.

On her arrival, Her Highness was received by Rai Bahadur Pandit Amar Nath Atal, Finance and Education Minister, and given a rousing reception.

The function appropriately began with Vedic hymns and the Ganesh and Saraswati Pooja. In conformity with tradition, brahmins were fed on the occasion and the girl-pupils given a present of batashas [sugary sweets] and hankerchiefs [sic]. Members of the School Staff were presented to Her Highness.

After the welcome speech by Rai Bahadur Pandit Amar Nath Atal, Her Highness declared open the new school which is *"to impart to girls of a particular class, education befitting their status, and in an atmosphere congenial to their training as efficient members of society."*

The presence of Her Highness on this memorable occasion and her gracious ceremony are indicative of the trend of the times and characteristic of her own innate love for the educational advancement of the daughters of Jaipur, and *her deep-rooted desire to find them well-equipped for their future role as the "guardian angels" of home and society.*

(*Diamond Jubilee Book*, 2003, emphasis added)

They went on to declare the Rajmata herself as a symbol of the "new" Indian woman, described by the Inspectress of Schools, Mrs. Savitri Bhartiya, as "a true prototype of today's progressive womanhood"– beautiful, graceful, educated, athletic, a socialite, and a good wife, mother, and hostess. Her arrival in Jaipur was said to be the "beginning of the end of blind orthodoxy" as "she heralded an era of [a] rare blend of modernity and traditions" (*ibid.*). MGD claimed to be a protected space both modern and essentially "Indian," in concert with certain traditions, combining the "best of the West" with the "best of the East," along the same lines as cultural-nationalist rhetoric of the time emphasizing the superiority of "Western" knowledge and science and "Eastern" traditions and culture (Chatterjee 1992). Soaring claims such as these, along with the popularity of the Rajmata, were aimed at conservative, aristocratic families in the hopes that it would make them comfortable sending their daughters to the school (*Silver Jubilee Souvenir* 1968). Anticipating the issue of parental consent in his speech at the school's inauguration, Jaipur's Finance Minister, Rai Bahadur Pandit Amer Nath Atal, advised that,

> The success of the School, however, largely depends *on the willing and ready cooperation of the people of this State* and I hope parents will not fail to avail themselves of the opportunity offered here….We aim at incorporating in the school many trends of modern educational thought. It shall have teachers of the highest qualifications, personality and character. The physical development and well-being of its wards will be its special care, and among the various facilities to be offered will be a lovely swimming pool – a very useful and valuable gift from our Maharani. (*ibid.*, emphasis added)

Exemplified in the Finance Minister's endorsement is the priority placed upon a safely monitored, quality educational experience, a prestigious opportunity parents would be foolish to overlook. In her own inaugural speech, Maharani Gayatri Devi proposed that the new school was "to impart to girls of a particular class, education befitting their status and in an atmosphere congenial to their training as efficient members of society." In this was a two-fold understanding

that the social realities of the time and place required a gradual and integrated approach to change and a classed vision of girls' education, one that would prepare them for a life both inside and outside the home. Practices such as *purdah* that restricted high-caste women from working and attending school readily also made it so women were economically dependent on male family members, unable to contribute in any tangible way to their family's social standing beyond giving birth to male children. Witnessing and experiencing the levels of emancipation among her European schoolmates abroad in England and Switzerland influenced Maharani Gayatri Devi's understanding of the purpose of girls' education as well as her inclination to hire an Englishwomen on the subcontinent to lead her school.

Miss Lillian Godfreda Donnithorne Lutter, born in Maymyo, Burma, where her father was stationed in the British army, was educated in England before returning to Burma as a teacher and later superintendent at Morton Lane School, Moulmein, one of the largest girls' schools in Burma (Devi 1980). Forced to flee Burma due to the war with Japan, Miss Lutter was eventually interviewed and hired by Maharani Gayatri Devi as principal of MGD given her experiences in educational leadership and as "a warm admirer of Indian philosophy and culture" (*Flowers of Memory* 1980). Similar to her initial words at Madhovilas, on July 30, 1944, at the inauguration of MGD's current school building on the 26-acre site across from the Ram Niwas Gardens, Maharani Gayatri Devi again declared that:

> The aim of this institution is to make its pupils *cultured and useful members of society*. They should, when they enter the world, be able to take an *active interest in the betterment of their homes and community* and when they grow up and take place in life, having the advantage of a sound education, which will *enable them to fit themselves usefully into the world of tomorrow*. (emphasis added)

Yet, in her want to free girls from their homes and the practice of *purdah*, she and Miss Lutter knew that they must convince the girls' families to enroll them in the school first.

Early recruitment efforts saw Maharani Gayatri Devi ensuring the "modern" and "traditional" aspects of her proposed school to those parents of daughters within her personal networks. Padma, who arrived in Jaipur with her father after fleeing Pakistan during Partition, recollected how she and her sister, neither of which knew Hindi or English at the time, were recruited to MGD through such methods,

"Oh she went to every house, visited every house, and told the parents, 'Please send your daughters,' and nobody could refuse because she was the Maharani. And she said that she'd make proper arrangements and she arranged for buses which were curtained with a maid inside to protect them. So from house to house they would pick up the child and drop them back and because the culture was such, we were not asked to wear Western clothes. Yes, as small children yes, we wore tunics and white blouses and tie and all, but as soon as we came into puberty we changed into *salwar kameez*. So she was sensitive to Indian culture and of not hurting the feelings of her friends and their parents for bringing their daughter to her school. And she preserved [the idea] that modesty in a girl is a good thing and, uh, not *too* much modernity. Girls can dance and swim and ride, but there can't be too much freedom or they won't listen to their husbands or their fathers or brothers."

As detailed by Padma, buses curtained from the outside and from the driver were provided staffed with an *ayah* [maid] charged with holding up curtains [*kanaats*] so the girls could traverse the space between their home and the bus and the bus and the school's gates unseen. In addition, men were not permitted on the school's premises at any time (not even the Maharaja), traditional Indian clothing was worn, separate vegetarian and non-vegetarian

cafeterias were planned, and all Indian festivals were celebrated. In place of other available English-medium options that only offered a "convent education," MGD was imagined as an education rooted in Indian values something of a sister school in the minds of parents to Mayo College, Ajmer, as well as a model for future all-girls' schools in other former princely states.

Gwalior, as one of the largest princely states in India prior to independence, was similar to Jaipur in the fact that all-girls' schools were largely restricted to convent schools run by Irish and Belgian nuns, schools that were largely seen as unsuitable for the state's upper-caste daughters who also observed some degree of *purdah*. Now 13-years after MGD's founding (and six years since MGD was named the first all-girls' "Public School," becoming member-affiliated to the IPSC [IPSS] in 1950), Maharani Vijaya Raje Scindia was admittedly influenced by the Jaipur queen's accomplishment. Her vision of a school for girls in comparison to that of Maharani Gayatri Devi, though, was not one that emerged solely from a want to bring about progress for Gwalior's women, but was also about *preserving* what she felt was being lost in a changing, post-independence India. The education of girls from "good families" was seen as foundational to both missions, as she stated:

> I felt the Indian woman was drifting away from her valuable heritage. The progress of science along with the industrialization it brought changed the old pattern of life. Because of economic conditions, Indian women *had to come out, [and] also add to the family income*. I believe in the old adage, 'The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.' I wanted a school to strengthen those hands. My dream was to start a school which would serve both these ends. (Sarwal 2006:23, emphasis added)

In this we see a kind of reluctance, where it was not that women *should* come out of their homes and participate in public life, but *had* to come out due to economic necessity. Now, this is not to suggest that Vijaya Raje wanted women to remain in *purdah* while Gayatri Devi did not, as the

latter did express moments of nostalgia throughout her lifetime too, lamenting over supposedly lost traditions, values, and discipline of days past, but to emphasize their differences in approach to keeping-while-giving in terms of defining "Western" and "Indian" educational forms, forms that would admittedly converge over time as they grew older and became increasingly disenfranchised and disillusioned by certain post-colonial changes.

True to their experiences and relationships with the British, Gayatri Devi envisioned a type of girls' education which would integrate the Western values and practices she had experienced abroad into standing Indian traditions while Vijaya Raje had "taken an interest" in a "new system of learning" which she opined, "borrowed heavily from our ancient methods of imparting knowledge, but rejected much of what we had blindly adopted from the British" (Scindia & Malgonkar 1988:255-6). Instead of hiring an Englishwoman like Miss Lutter as principal of her school, Vijaye Raje sought out the leadership of Mrs. Vishalakshmi Johri, theosophist and her former teacher at Besant Women's College. Yet, this is not to say that SKV was not involved in the same discourses of "balance" that MGD purported to embody. One of SKV's first students, Radha (Piplani) Rastogi, recalled how her mother, then principal of a degree college in Dehradun and eventually SKV's third principal, had become increasingly "disturbed" by her teenage daughter "who insisted on piano lessons rather than the sitar, wearing skirts rather than *salwar kameez*, and listening to the latest cha cha cha numbers rather than Indian classical music" so she decided to send her to SKV, "a girls' school where the best of east and west could merge [as] was the need of the hour" (Sarwal 2006:29). When her mother met with Maharani Vijaya Raje Scindia to discuss her possible principalship and Radha's enrollment, they laid out their "plans for the 'Indianisation' [sic] of recalcitrant daughters" (*ibid.*). Similar to MGD, a curtained bus was provided for transporting day-students, Indian festivals were

celebrated with gusto, and school uniforms when introduced in 1958 were blue *salwar kameez* with some students allowed to wear hand-spun *khadi* dresses per their families' practice.

When classes began on August 1, 1956, located temporarily in Vijaya Bhawan [City Palace], only eight girls were enrolled including the two Scindian princesses, Usha Raje and Padma Raje, and six others. A few weeks in, 25 more students had enrolled, six as boarders, including the first President of India's, Dr. Rajendra Prasad's, four granddaughters; the daughters of other former princely families, politicians, and industrialists (*e.g.* Birlas, Modis, and Mangharams); and a few younger brothers, still too young to attend the Scindia School at Gwalior fort. Enrollment continued to grow continuously throughout the first year so that when SKV was officially declared open on October 28, 1956, by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Maharani Vijaya Raje Scindia, and her husband, His Highness Maharaja Jiwajirao Scindia, it was in front of a group of about 40 students, parents, and a dozen or so teachers (*ibid.*:22). A few weeks later in November 1956, a ceremony was held commemorating the laying of the foundation stone by Indira Gandhi for the school's future main building, Madhav Bhawan. During its construction, classes were continually moved from building to building within the palace complex to accommodate the school's growing size. In 1957, classes were held in Shantiniketan for six months before shifting to Vishranti, a building opposite the Jaivilas Palace. At this point, the school had grown to 87-students (the majority being day-scholars) and 16-teachers. Finally in 1959, SKV moved to its present-day location on the over 35-acre Kamla Bhawan site, then consisting of only three buildings, one of which formerly hosted foreign state visitors to the palace (Madhav Bhawan would not be completed for another year).

In matters of school construction and space, affiliations to the princely families of Jaipur and Gwalior had its advantages. Though in comparison to their "brother schools" there was an

absence of grandiose building projects and development given skepticism over whether these schools would remain open past even a year, MGD and SKV were able to acquire land through donated palace grounds and were relatively fiscally secure thanks to trusts and societies set up by the royal families. For a school with no direct feudal backing as Welham Girls', then, the road proved even more uncertain. During her time as a dame at The Doon School, Miss Oliphant expressed a desire to establish a similar school in the city for girls. While headmaster, Arthur Foot, first convinced her to set-up a preparatory school for boys that would feed into Doon, resulting in the founding of Welham Preparatory School in 1937, the parents of both institutions soon began to ask for a school specifically for their daughters. When Miss Oliphant sent out a notice to these parents asking for donations to help launch the school, however, she received a disappointing Rs 11,000. This, at a time when palaces and ex-imperial fortresses were donated for schools and institutions such as Doon were formed with initial funds of Rs 14 lakh (Rs 1,400,000) (Akbar 2007:80). Even so, a building was eventually rented to house the girls' school in 1957, "Nasreen," one of Dehradun's largest residential properties belonging previously to Sabibzada Dr. Saiduzaffar Khan, a retired principal of King George's Medical College, Lucknow and friend of Miss Oliphant (*ibid.*). That year, Welham Girls' School, named after her childhood village home outside Nottinghamshire, England, opened its doors with ten students. One by one additional properties around Nasreen were bought or rented, all out of the personal pension and savings of the school's first principal, Miss Linnell, resulting in a rather spread out and disconnected campus (*ibid.*:79, 82).

Like Miss Oliphant, Grace Mary Linnell was an Englishwomen, a graduate from Newnham College, Cambridge, before she came to India at the age of 22 to become a teacher of history and English at the Mehbubia Girls' School, Hyderabad in the early 1920s. Much of her

experiences here would later influence the structures and approach of Welham. Similar to MGD in many ways, the Mehbubia Girls' School was not "a pioneer in the field of education for girls in Hyderabad" since missionary schools had opened in the state as early as the 1850s, but fulfilled another purpose – the education of daughters of the aristocracy and upper classes (*ibid.*:3). Along with Gwalior and Baroda, Hyderabad was one of the five, 21-gunshot princely states under Crown rule, and as per the custom of *purdah*, most upper-class girls were educated at home by governesses. Sarojini Naidu (the eventual first woman president of the Indian National Congress), Lady Hydrie (wife of the finance secretary, Sir Akbar Hydrie), and other "concerned ladies of the time" pressed the British Resident's wife, Lady Glancy, for a school to fit this need (*ibid.*). And so, in 1907 the school was founded, staffed mainly by "highly qualified teachers, mostly European" with the purpose of educating "girls of good Indian families," who arrived in curtain-fitted cars and buggies and entered through a "purdah gate" (*ibid.*:7, 4). One ex-Mahbubian and future mother of a Welhamite recalled how at the school:

> Family background was of considerable importance and admissions strictly regulated, so even if newly rich business families could afford the school – its fees was amongst the highest then – they would not be admitted if the background and breeding were not considered right. It was not essential to be a nawabi, it was necessary to be well-bred. (*ibid.*:9)

Miss Linnell, aware of the girls' backgrounds and respectful of their family customs, as another ex-student put it, "insist[ed] on maintaining our Indian-ness….you wore only kurta-pajamas [and] your pronunciation had to be Indian" (*ibid.*). Thus, when Miss Linnell left Hyderabad after 26-years of service as a teacher and then principal to come to Welham, she not only brought her reputation and therefore sizable retinue of ex-Mahbubians, but her desire to establish in Dehradun "an educational institution that preserved the Indian culture and was not imitative of

the British system" (*ibid.*:84). So, for example, though at the time other English medium schools were using blazers and skirts as their school uniforms as the *salwar kameez* was gaining an association with "government" schools (read lower class), Miss Linnell insisted that the Welham Girls' uniforms be *salwar kameez* for the older girls while the younger ones wore Cotswold wool frocks.[29] She even insisted the school's motto was written in Sanskrit, "*Artha shanti phala vidya*," "the aim of knowledge is to bring peace." "She didn't want the children Americanized or Westernized," recalls an ex-Welhamite, "She felt very strongly that Indians must be Indians" (*ibid.*:104); or as another early student of the school put it:

> It was [Miss Linnell's] exposure to a society [in Hyderabad] that kept women locked up and ignorant, and her experience of what could be done to liberate them with a little education, a little fresh air (she even got the daughters of the *purdah* ladies into divided skirts and onto the basketball field), that made the cause of women's education in India the guiding passion of her life. (*I Have Wings* 2007:19)

Similar to Maharani Gayatri Devi and MGD's Miss Lutter, then, customs such as *purdah* were to be changed, but through a realization and respect for family traditions and culture.

Despite their lack of grand buildings there was no shortage of rhetorical mission at these three schools. Primacy was regularly placed on the quality of teachers tasked with conveying and embodying the lessons of liberation education could provide. One foundational teacher at Welham stated that she "learnt from [Miss Linnell] that the greatness of a school does not lie in the buildings and the frills and fringes you give….The management of a school, she would say, is mainly the management of human beings" (Akbar 2007:81). To this end, all three schools speak of the young, frequently unmarried, female teachers who came to teach, recruited from

[29] The uniforms changed with the times – "The Cotswolds went out in 1962 when, in a fit of 'convenient' patriotism, all those dresses were converted into padded jackets for the jawans [soldiers] fighting the Chinese war in cold high altitude areas. In 1963 polo-necked sweaters were introduced to be worn with slacks" (*I Have Wings* 2007:102).

nearby or from as far as Bengal and South India for their superior English skills. Most if not all were college graduates, though lacking in classroom teaching experience, with some even coming from such hailed schools as Tagore's Shantiniketan near Calcutta, where Gayatri Devi herself was once a student. While teaching, especially at an all-girls' residential school, was considered a safe and appropriate job for women, particularly those unmarried or widowed, the pay was not much. Salaries for teachers at MGD in the 1940s and at Welham Girls' through the 1960s, for example, were between Rs 150-300 per month. Knowing the principal was taking little-to-no salary herself, however, many teachers described not wanting to "let her down" or feeling as if they "owed it to her" to make similar sacrifices (*ibid.*:90).[30]

Formative Narratives of Differential Modernities

For all Welham's similarities to schools like MGD and SKV particularly in their narratives of difference that separated them from "othered" schools such as those of the government and convent variety, Welham also became enveloped in discourses "inherited" from their brother school, Doon, which placed "feudal" schools like the former Chiefs' Colleges (and now MGD and SKV by relation) also in a category of inferior "other." Linked to IPSC statutes of "liberal" education (*i.e.* universalism, individualism, rationalism, and secularism), values such as "diversity" and "merit" became tied to school identity and students' voiced feelings of belonging and difference. In part, diversity was understood in terms of the proposed "non-denominational" nature of Welham. While "feudal" schools such as MGD and SKV were seen as largely Hindu, those attached to Welham Girls' often pointed to its sizable number of Muslim students, many of

[30] Male teachers were a rare sight as their presence was not allowed in the beginning due to customs of *purdah* and as teaching was not considered a reputable job for men, especially at such low salaries. If anything, men began to appear on the schools' campuses around the mid-1950s, usually arriving after classes to coach games and sports or provide instructions in music or art.

whom were connected to Miss Linnell and her time in Hyderabad, as well as its purposeful integration of various ideologies and religious texts into their daily assemblies and lessons as evidence of this fact. This was recollected by one Welhamite:

> At assembly, Miss Linnell made it a point to read prayers that were distinctly secular, never promoting one religion as being better than another. It could be a reading from the Vedas, the Quran or the Bible. It could equally be Thomas More or Confucius or a poem, anything inspiring. Every one of the girls seems to remember her standing and reading. One of her favourite hymns was from St. Francis of Assissi [sic], "Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace; Where there is hatred, let me so love…." It was a subtle but clear message given to the school every morning. (Akbar 2007:113)

Since girls at Welham were known either by their first names or roll numbers, many students also argued that family, caste, and religious backgrounds were made irrelevant. "Questions of religion, rich or poor, did not arise. Nobody knew who was who and nor did they care" (*ibid.*), offered another student, bringing up another element of perceived school diversity – social class – understood through various non-feudal (*i.e.* non-caste-based) rationalizations. In this way, she again differentiates Welham from schools like MGD:

> The only caste system…was moral integrity and excellence. The school was choc-a-bloc with *rajkumaris* [princesses]; we had a lot of ex-royalty, girls from Tripura, Patiala, Nepal. Every class had them. I think they were sent to Welham because the school taught values and manners, but whereas in schools like Maharani Gayatri Devi in Rajasthan they were given status and had personal *ayahs* and so on, in Welham they were immediately reduced to being one of the many. (*ibid.*:114)

Interestingly, this student then qualifies her statement by admitting that some of the girls who came to Welham from "landed families" and princely states took time to "get used to being like everyone else," having the dormitory *ayah* clean their shoes for them each night in the beginning (*ibid.*).

In this way, such relativistic statements often proved contradictory, overly simplified, or anachronistic after closer analysis. They frequently compared conditions at Welham Girls' in the present to practices and conditions at MGD when it first opened in 1943, 17-years prior (*e.g.* students having personal chaperones on campus). However, MGD not only received IPSC membership in 1950, seven years prior to Welham Girls' opening, meaning it had to abide in character and mission to that of the Conference (*i.e.* a liberal education, rationalism, secularism, etc.) but had a similarly inclined principal. MGD alumnae would recount surprisingly parallel stories to me about not knowing the socio-economic backgrounds of their classmates and Miss Lutter's secular practices, including regularly reading from diverse religious and philosophical texts at morning assembly. Moreover, as other scholars have previously argued (*see* Srivastava 1998), the type of "secularism" practiced at schools such as MGD, SKV, and Welham (and within the IPSC in general) was particular in its form in that "Indian" culture, traditions, or practices writ large were often defined in terms of a Hindu worldview. It could be argued, for example, that the Welham's motto, chosen specifically by Miss Linnell for its "Indian" qualities, is a phrase written in Sanskrit with meanings specifically linked to ideologies common in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism (*e.g.* moksha, enlightenment, etc.). In terms of social class as well, the first few batches of girls at MGD and Welham came from admittedly similar backgrounds (*i.e.* feudal, business/industrial, government, and armed services); and both schools had similar narratives of "open" admission and "equal access." An alumna of MGD held that the school was never meant to only serve those from the elite classes but was envisioned as a site of emancipation for *all* women regardless of caste, creed, race, or social status (*Silver Jubilee Souvenir* 1968). These goals of inclusivity were extended through open-enrollment after a few years, a fact Miss Lutter once stated was depicted by MGD's "doors of opportunity" on the cover

of the school's first prospectus. And though Welham did not at first have an entrance exam since "Miss Linnell did not believe in picking the cream," in general, girls were from "good families" (Akbar 2007:105).

OUR LITTLE ONES

To our Parents:—

In and through all the activities of the school, we who are responsible for the training and growth of youth, trust that we can constantly bear in mind the idea contained in Joseph Addison's 'Spectator', No. 215, November 6, 1711.

"I consider a human soul without education like marble in the quarry, which shows none of its inherent beauties till the skill of the polisher fetches out the colours, makes the surface shine, and discovers every ornamental cloud, spot, and vein that runs through the body of it."

We would request each parent to help us bring out the beauty inherent in the girl they have entrusted to our care.

Miss Lilian G. Luttee, M.B.E.
HEADMISTRESS,
M. Gayatri Devi Girls' School,
Jaipur.

Government Press, Jaipur.

Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School
Jaipur.

Touch nothing without embellishing it

Figure 11 MGD Prospectus, 1943

Indeed, the true "openness" of these schools was collectively limited to those families who could pay the fees and expenses. School fees at all three schools were comparable within the first decade and half of their opening. MGD's first prospectus in 1943 lists school fees as Rs 10 for admissions; Rs 50-100 for tuition, depending on grade level; Rs 50 for activities, games, and library access; Rs 45 for board and lodging or Rs 5 for daily bus service; and Rs 5-10 for pocket money, totaling a maximum of approximately Rs 215 per annum. At SKV in 1957, school fees were similar at Rs 25 for admissions, Rs 90 per month for tuition, Rs 150 for stationary and books, and Rs 10 for pocket money (Sarwal 2006:32). As pointed out by early alumnae,

however, these fees did not usually include ancillary costs of participating in the school's countless festivals and annual functions which required costumes, make-up, props, scenery, the hiring of special instructors, etc. At Welham, Miss Linnell was said not to "believe in very high fees." While Doon's fees were much higher, she always considered the fact that parents were "always willing to spend on their boys but not quite so ready to do the same for their daughters" (Akbar 2007:89). Either way, given the price levels and the "perceptions of needs" in those years surrounding independence, researchers have estimated that "anything in a broad income band from Rs 1,200 to Rs 12,000 per annum was sufficient to entitle one to membership" of the so-called middle class (Varma 1998:26). Not only were fees at all three schools, then, not quite so extravagant but they as well as the IPSC and the Government of India also later made certain merit-cum-need scholarships available in order to increase Public School student body diversity and dissuade rising critiques in the 1950s-60s of the Conference's elitism.

These formative narratives of difference contending for the superiority of one's own school on various fronts served not only as early anecdotes of would-be elite school rivalries, but as evidence of institutional and individual work defining the forms education for upper caste/ class girls in northern India could and should take, and to what end. These determinations were at the same time constructed by and contributing to a decades-long debate over "the woman question" – of defining, (re)awakening, and cultivating the essence of "modern Indian womanhood." The schools' founders and founder-principals, their iterations of female personhood and visions for their schools, were seeped in such discourses of an appropriate Indian-Western balance, enacted as the slow breaking from backward traditions (*e.g. purdah*), the preservation of essential traditions, and the integration of particular liberal tenets meant to prepare these girls for a changing nation. Not only were the value-laden discussions regarding

the balanced personhoods of Gayatri Devi, Vijaya Raje Scindia, and, to an even greater degree, Miss Lutter, Miss Oliphant, and Miss Linnell dissimilar to concerns at the boys' schools that emphasized the "Britishness" of leading figures such as Arthur Foot and John Martyn of Doon, F.G. Pearce of Scindia, and J.T.M. Gibson of Mayo College, but the visionary stories of the start of the boys' schools were also not enunciated through the same nuanced language that detailed the so-called "courage," "determination," "selflessness," "romantic idealism," and "cheerful sacrifice" of the founding principals and teachers of MGD, SKV, and Welham, women working on little-to-no pay at institutions possibly doomed to fail within the year. As argued prior, such gendered descriptives were not anomalies but fit feudal (*i.e.* martial caste) and later, nationalist narratives of upper-caste/class female sacrifice for self and societal betterment.

They also parallel many of Maharani Gayatri Devi's words at MGD's open. But what form did these educational missions, similarly presented at SKV and Welham, take and through what types of lessons meant to train girls "of a particular class" to be "efficient members of society?" Moreover, how did these schools' first students understand the purposes and results of such an education, engage in missions of combining the best of the East and West, and voice their experiences of proposed "emancipation" through access?

Early Curricula:
The Cultivation and Projection of a "Modern Indian Womanhood"

Social reproduction theorists studying education (*e.g.* Bourdieu & Passeron 1977; Lareau 1989, 2011) have traditionally argued that schools succeed in validating and (re)entrenching upper-class values, norms, behaviors, and ideals through structures, pedagogies, and lessons already absorbed by upper-class students at home. However, within the Indian context of

particular historical moments, differentiated for gender, alignments between home and school are not always so seamless. Throughout the feudal-colonial-nationalist years of influence, upper-class girls of course benefited from the socio-economic standings of their families and their attending high status networks. Customarily, however, status, power, identities, and ownership over capital, detached from the family and men, were not easily accessibly or recognized. Schools like MGD, SKV, and Welham, therefore, ultimately endeavored to transmit to their female students something frequently *unavailable* at home – a modern, liberal, knowledge- and skills-based, English-medium education with access to semi-public spaces – while also prioritizing certain Indian traditions and "family values" anxiously identified as fading in the home in the decades post-independence.

In 1943, the MGD model resembled something very similar to European finishing schools of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with much attention given to the domestic and moral sciences as well as to history, language development, mathematics, games, and activities. As detailed in the school's first prospectus, "Housecraft" which included housewifery, cooking, laundry-work, and needlework were compulsory subjects in 4th to 10th Standard while the upper-grades additionally offered a "simple but purposeful knowledge of Hindi Reading and Composition, English Reading and Composition, Arithmetic, Geography, and Indian and World History." Aligned to the Senior Cambridge Examination administered in England, all teaching was conducted in English with special attention given to the study of Hindi, Indian history, music, and dance as well. Being that the school's first students came from diverse educational backgrounds with varying abilities in English, girls were grouped in classes based on their levels of knowledge and proficiency instead of by age. In 1956, SKV had a not too dissimilar curriculum but offered two streams – "English," for those who would take the Senior Cambridge

exams, and "Hindi," for those who would take the Madhya Pradesh State Board exams in Class XI. Here, classes were largely determined by language stream, the number of students enrolled, and teachers available. If, for example, only one student was registered for Class VI Hindi, she might be bumped down to Class V or up to VII depending. Welham's classes were similarly arranged, albeit with only one language stream offered in English as with MGD. With a focus on discipline, strict routines, and time management, the school day at all three institutions was divided into periods from morning PT, to afternoon chores, to evening lights-out for boarders. Wanting to impart lessons of competition, fair play, and sportsmanship, sports such as swimming, kho kho, throwball, badminton, skating, volleyball, track and field, hockey, netball, tennis, and yoga[31] also played a significant part in their curricula, in addition to Western and Indian forms of arts and crafts, dance, dramatics, debate, and music.

The integration of such forms and disciplines considered "Western" or "Indian" led many students to consider their education as an act of mediation. Vinita, a 1954 MGD alumna, for one, expressed that this balance in educational approach emerged from the school's founder herself,

"Even Maharani Gayatri Devi was very balanced since she had a Western education and the ideal Indian education – she had gone to Shantiniketan, Tagore's [school], and later for finishing school she had gone to Switzerland. So she combined both, the Indian and the Western. And she combined these two cultures beautifully and that's what they taught us [at MGD]. We learned Indian classical dance as well as ballroom dance."

Even with this integration, however, it was important that these girls remained essentially "Indian." Thus, MGDians were acclaimed for having "no Western veneer about [them]," able to "fit to perfection into any Indian home" (*Flowers of Memory* 1980); SKV's purpose was "to create girls not as memsahibs but to create a woman who imbibed all the values of Indian culture

[31] MGD also had riding until 1948 with horses provided from the palace stables.

and just the right Western adaptations….a young lady who would adjust to the changing face of post-Independence India" (Sarwal 2006:45); and "the difference between convents of the time and [Welham] was Miss Linnell's insistence on maintaining our Indianness. There was no question of any attempt to create young British ladies" (Akbar 2007:9). Students were to take the knowledge and lessons of an all-round, liberal education, along the British Public Schooling model, but still retain their Indian traditions and customs, considered superior to the West and the retinue of identity.

Many of the schools' first batches of girls were accustomed to living relatively sheltered and localized lives due not only to the variously practiced forms of *purdah* but also to more general classed and gendered expectations of society and the home. Starting in 1943 with a group of what Miss Lutter described as 24, "bewildered girls – very shy, very reserved, very demure, very uncommunicative" (*Flowers of Memory* 1980), efforts were put in place to make them more aware of the outside world.

"Miss Lutter read the news to us. At that time the radios were not that much, but Miss Lutter made us *aware*," explained Deepti. "We had elections; we knew who had been elected, what was happening in the country; we read the news, knew when Gandhi *ji* was assassinated, when V. Pandit became the head of the United Nations, you know? The teachers were very progressive….Changes were coming along. We were having a more open life than our parents. My mother never even went to a school. You know, an open life, and by that I mean more exposure… [Miss Lutter] brought the outside world in to us, you know, by reading the news, by telling us what's happening in the world, and maybe it made sense or did not make sense, but we were aware. When it came to Independence we had to sing all those songs that we were taught.

We shared all things European, Western, wearing *khaddar*, the home spun [cloth]….we knew what was happening in the country because it was open to us, not in our homes, but at school."

Beyond awareness, however, these schools were also about encouraging participation as it was not enough just to serve as symbols of national progress and the condition of women. Here, an MGD school logo from the 1950s depicting three MGDians dressed in their royal blue and red school uniforms enacting Gandhi's well-known attachment to the Buddhist phrase, "Hear no evil; Speak no evil; See no evil," alongside student involvement in staging their own mock elections on MGD's campus in sync with India's first national elections in 1952 represent some of these tensions between women-as-objects or symbols of the nationalist project and women as agentive actors.

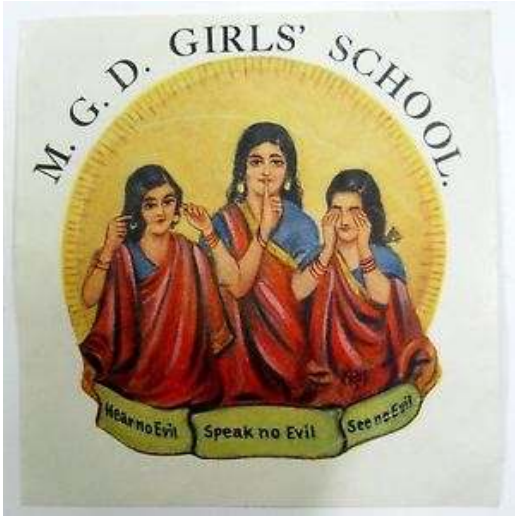

Figure 12 Logo on MGD student journal, 1950s

All students at the school were split into two parties, the Brobdingnags and Lilliputians (names taken from Jonathan Swift's famous novel, *Gulliver's Travels*), and then selected their own candidates whom they wished to field.

> A week before the date, we started campaigning in real earnest. The school curriculum was adjusted accordingly. There were posters, slogans, etc. and speeches were made

> extolling the virtues of the candidate and the manifesto that the party proposed to follow. Lots of friendships were put on hold as friends found themselves in opposing camps. The choice of party was stipulated by the teaching staff so as to keep equal numbers on both sides. On election day, make-shift polling booths were put up in the assembly hall, complete with election officers on duty, marking ink, ballot papers on tables and locked ballot boxes for casting votes behind screens. Secrecy was the key note. It was the magic mantra of the day. At last, order finally prevailed, as the girls lined up to cast their votes. (*MGD Diamond Jubilee* 2003)

Practices such as these and others similarly occurring at SKV and Welham point to a desire on the part of these schools' principals and teachers, as one 1958 graduate of MGD suggested, "to give girls a grounded view [of] and active role in the new nation; one that inspired [them] to think outside [their] homes, to be involved [in] and knowledgeable about what was going on around [them]." She continued,

"Go back and imagine the situation when the school was founded – British rule and the freedom movement with Quit India. The literacy rates in the country were extremely low. The school was a miracle of sorts.…We led very sheltered lives where communication with the outside world was almost nil [sic]….It was a centered and secluded life, [so] we knew we were very privileged to be at such an elite institution."

However, opportunities for exposure were still frequently balanced with the practice of utilizing these institutions and their female students as symbols of national and state development alongside preserved (and somewhat romanticized) Indian traditions and regional culture. This duel imperative was specifically evident in the presentations and performances these Public Schools put on for its chief guests. Through the 1940s into the early '80s, MGD was considered a must-see destination for any visiting dignitary to Jaipur (especially after the campus opened-up to male visitors). Foreign and national leaders alike were brought to see the school

and its students by Maharani Gayatri Devi and Maharaja Man Singh II, often treated to performances of Indian dance and Hindu religious dramas as well as English plays. Students greeted their guests with a "traditional Rajasthani welcome," wherein four students dressed in Rajput *kanchli kurtis*, using *alpanas* [colorful motifs drawn on the ground] and *diyas* [candles] as decoration, performed *aarti* [Hindu religious ritual], giving their guests a *mala* [garland] and *tilak* [mark on forehead] to signify an auspicious beginning. Guests were then invited to observe classroom activities and once established, perform inspections of the school's band, National Cadet Corps (NCC), and science laboratories (practices still performed on MGD's campus today).

"The London Shakespeare Company came to Jaipur and they were hosted by MGD," offered Gita, a 1957 MGD alum, as we were sitting in her two-story flat. "I mean any big thing – Queen Elizabeth came, she visited MGD; the Kennedys came, they visited MGD; Laxmi Pandit came, she visited MGD; Nehru came, he visited MGD. Any big dignitary who came to India and visited Jaipur would be brought to see MGD. Queen Elizabeth was of course a personal friend of the Rajmata and so were the Kennedys, they had them as personal guests to the U.S. And," she added, "MGD was there to show them that this is our school and it is as good as your British and American ones."

Jyoti, another early MGD alumna of the batch of 1953, expressed similar sentiments, "Look at the people who came to our school – Indira Gandhi, the Queen, the Kennedys, Nehru *ji*. Our school was like a showpiece. Sarojini Naidu, she came and addressed the school. I got an autograph of hers. I got Eleanor Roosevelt's autograph. Oh, she sat through our dance program and she was so tired. She arrived in Jaipur and they said that she must come see MGD Girls'

School, and she was sitting there and we were doing out *kathak* [classical Indian dance] and she was snoring away!" she recalled laughingly.

Events such as these were common at SKV and Welham Girls' as well. At SKV's first Founder's Day event in October 1957, for instance, chief guest, Indira Gandhi, was treated to a student art exhibit, junior and senior class plays of *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and performances of the *Ramayana* epic's *Bharat Milap* episode, a *kathak* solo, and a folk dance duet (Sarwal 2006:26-7).

Figure 13 Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip with Maharaja Man Singh II and Maharani Gayatri Devi receiving the "traditional welcome" from MGD students, 1961

Figure 14 Mayor of Calgary, Canada, and others with MGD students, dressed for a cultural performance, 1977

On one hand, these moments made schools like MGD, SKV, and Welham Girls' "showpieces" of upper caste/class women's emancipation and progress through a certain type of education, as expressed by Jyoti, where the figures of these girls, that is, how they dressed, carried themselves, and spoke, in Hindi and in an appropriately accented English, came to represent state and national progress through the supposed integration of ascendant (and romanticized) configurations of "Western" liberalism and "Indian" culture. Different then from the early all-boys' Chiefs' Colleges which strove to mimic the British Public Schools, the first all-girls' Indian Public Schools were established out of discourses which reconfigured Indian "modernity" as the bridging of East and West, or as put by Gita, "MGD was there to show them that this is our school and it is as good as your British and American ones." Aligned or at odds with that offered by their families, these schools were delivering class- (and gender-) specific training, preparing and extending opportunities to their students to interact with a diverse array of people of status on an international level. MGDians, SKVians, and Welhamites were taught to hold intelligent and well-informed conversation (often in English), eat appropriately, and display

correct etiquette and manners on these occasions, legitimizing their membership and acceptance among such a crowd.

"It was like a finishing school. Right from the word," Prafulla, a member of MGD's first batch of girls, regaled. "At home we were eating from one big platter, a *thali*, and sat on the floor with all five or six sisters or cousins. Everyone sat on the floor and ate from the same *thal*. So Miss Lutter then taught us all that each one should have a plate; we should keep a napkin. At that time there was a lot of British influence. And the Western style was considered very good. So we were all taught to pronounce things like "*serv-i-ette*," she laughed.

"Wow," I said, laughing along. We were chatting on one of the school's benches off in the shade by the rose garden.

"We were such fools! We didn't know what a napkin was! So that's how the school started and [Miss Lutter] got the thing going. It was like a finishing school. She taught us all how to eat beet root."

"Beet root?"

"It was not on our menu in Rajasthan but she said it's a *salad* so we started eating *salad*, beet root…and then we had puddings, a terrible blancmange [English pudding]," Prafulla said making a disgusted face and laughing. "There was like a thick, leathery layer on top!"

"And how to use a napkin you were saying?" I redirected.

"Yes. And we had a napkin bag with our names on it. We would fold our napkin, put it in the bag, and then leave it in the dining hall. So when you came, you'd get your thing, and sit down there and there was always a teacher sitting on either side [of the table]; and each and every manner was taught. I said finishing school, didn't I? How to pronounce words, how to speak English, and, uhm…."

"…etiquette?" I offered.

"Etiquette, manners – don't open your mouth when you're eating, how to carry yourself, how to shake hands, a firm shake, it's not weak. Till now I remember Miss Lutter saying, you need a firm shake. So all those little things were very important…."

But to what end? At their founding, the all-boys' Chiefs Colleges and original Indian Public Schools were charged with creating future leaders, fit for jobs in various industries, first to aid an imperial mission of legitimized control and later to serve as leaders of an independent nation. Comparatively, SKV was "conceived as an educational institution where students would gain not only scholastically, but *become good human beings, who would take pride in the culture and traditions of their rich heritage*" (*Sarwal* 2006:8, emphasis added); and Welham "equipped its girls *to face life as decent, well-rounded human beings, giving their young lives a strong foundation based on right values, fair-play, and respect for others*" (Akbar 2007:10, emphasis added). In these visionary statements, there is less talk of leadership and career preparation in favor of personal betterment and training in order to become "efficient" members of society. In the early to mid-20th century, this "efficiency" of women was still mainly understood and measured according to their abilities to perform certain gendered duties at home and within the family, and slowly, though less commonly, according to their contributions outside the home at a paying job. These schools' openings signified and existed within this post-colonial transition (Srivastava 1998) – while much of their first curricula reflected the Indian state's development strategies of the 1950s and 60s that focused on training women in the skills of "family management" and "home economics," these programs were largely ambivalent to women's own, independent economic standing (John 1996:3074). Maharani Gayatri Devi was said to have created her school with the hopes of "enabling each girl to lead the highest possible life *in the*

circumstances in which she was placed" (*MGD's Platinum Jubilee*, 2013, emphasis added). There is again a realization here of the need to balance women's emancipation through education, to balance the opening of opportunities for equal entrée into the public realm with an understanding of the primacy still placed on traditions and the family, represented largely by the appropriately arranged marriage of daughters. Below, a number of early alumnae consider such balance:

> **MC:** So at the time, what do you think the school was preparing women for?
>
> **Prafulla [MGD alum, 1953]:** Preparing women to face the world, the modern-coming world, because '47 had happened and the British were moving out and there was new leadership and basically all the boys were now looking for educated girls.
>
> **MC:** So, being ready to face the world meant being able to adjust to changing preferences in marriage arrangements?
>
> **P:** Yes, for marriage. Before, men were not interested in that [educated girls]. But after independence it was this way. It was so much so that they used to even come to Miss Lutter and say, "I have a son," and Miss Lutter would say, "Well, what is he doing?"
>
> **MC:** [laughs] So Miss Lutter would play match-maker?
>
> **P:** [laughs] Yes! But they weren't allowed! Till I was about 13 years old no men folk were allowed to watch our programs at school. Not even the Maharaja! He had to stay outside the school gate. Only the mothers came because *still*, even then, Miss Lutter had to think of the sensibilities of society. So she, uh, did not fight against those traditions, *yet* introduced the, I wouldn't say Western, but I'd say the *prevalent* situation that we would be facing when we grew up in a different world, in an independent India, a globalizing India. So we saw a changing world…from a *purdah* world.

> **Savitri [MGD alum, 1958]:** At that time, there were limited subjects, but we learned to build confidence and have hope in our future and get the spirit and the feeling that we as girls are no more inferior to boys, not in society or at other schools. Then, career

opportunities were not very many for my generation. Girls mostly went to school to develop an all-around personality, to find good husbands. But some were able to combine both – to be good housewives and to have a career. My own interest in diplomacy and international relations started in the school itself.

Laila [Welham alum, 1959]: For most of us then, marriage was the ultimate conclusion. Even the handful who [sic] planned to work saw a few years as an airhostess or nursery teacher as a prelude to their real careers as wives and mothers. Our curriculum and staff were not geared to creating professional. (Akbar 2007:111)

Vinita [MGD alum, 1954]: You know, we were taught to be self-sufficient. These were trades [cookery, needlework, etc.] that every girl ought to know.

MC: So they were training you to be self-sufficient; is that the same as being independent?

V: No, not really. They were preparing us for being a good housewife and a good hostess and to be a socialite. In those days, after Senior Cambridge, girls would get married. They wouldn't go for higher education. Some who did went to Lady Irwin College[32] for Home Science. Then later, the trend for girls was to go for medical. It was seen as a safe and respectable career for a girl.

As captured in these conversations, the schools created a new element on a girls' marital profile – educational status, a tag of legitimacy, prestige, quality, and grooming. In many of these statements, preparation for a "new and changing world" did not strictly refer to women's education as a need for greater participation, but for acquiring the new prerequisites for suitable marriages. If girls did pursue higher education, the great majority pursued some subject or course such as Home Science or Early Education which would again better prepare them for their "real careers" as learned and cosmopolitan wives and mothers. While popular rhetoric and memory

[32] Lady Irwin College is an all-girls' college a part of Delhi University.

frequently contend that Welham Girls', again in contradistinction to schools like MGD and SKV, opened with a more purposeful mission of creating women leaders and not just housewives and hostesses, as captured by Laila's quote above, they too had to meet parents and society where they were while slowly encouraging its students to take up jobs. That said, many early Welhamites, as well as MGDians and SKVians, did go on to hold positions and careers outside the home in politics, government, service, activism, business, education, medicine, journalism, the arts, and more. As one 1957 graduate of Welham offers about Miss Linnell, "She created this urge in us to do something. I even made it to Parliament. She gave us the courage to go beyond, to do things you want to do, you dared to do" (Akbar 2007:109). Over the decades, as more and more women entered roles of power within India, and MGD alumnae became established in various fields, their occurrence as school chief guests also increased in place of foreign (male) dignitaries, demonstrating to current students the possible outcomes of such an education.

However, beyond marriage and job qualifications alumnae commonly hold that these schools were largely about character development, cultivating a consciously individualized sense of self, and being able and driven to contribute to society. As put by one 1959 Welhamite,

"It was not that Miss Linnell was obsessed with a career per se, a job, but she wanted the girls to have an identity, an individuality, to be a person with a character and be able to influence your own family or society, to make a difference. Whether you held a job or not was not the important thing; you must have your own identity and think for yourself. It was important for girls to have a sense of self-worth, of self-confidence" (Akbar 2007:111).

Being an MGDian, an SKVian, a Welhamite, a *jija* or *didi* [elder sister], which they came to call each other, became tags of belonging and prestige differentiating them from girls who attended other "types" of schools as well as an identity separate from the family, offering a sense

of self as well as a sense of community among groups of women. If we again recall the speech by MGD's former Head Girl at the school's 70th anniversary, she stated that, "The extent to which we witnessed each other's lives made it so we would not be anonymous anymore…we became someone." It is in this sense that international educationalist Nelly Stromquist (1995:22) suggests that:

> When women talk to other women about their personal experiences, they validate it and construct a new reality. When women describe their own experiences, they discover their role as agents in their own world and also start establishing connections between their micro realities and macro-social contexts.

These schools offered space and time for such dialogue among girls of differing opinions and experiences to, as the MGD alum, Savitri, stated, "Build confidence and have hope in our future and get the spirit and the feeling that we as girls are no more inferior to boys, not in society or at other schools." They created *networks* of Public School women that were formalized through the establishment of Old Girls' Associations and Guilds, providing platforms for coordinating school reunions, fundraisers, and social events; for professional, business, or activist endeavors; and for maintaining more informal, personal connections with women spread across the globe.

As women who shared specific educational experiences and identities often defined in terms of balance, all-round abilities, skills in English, high levels of grooming, and held traditions, they were also defined in terms of a proclivity for contributing to society, as "symbols" and participants. This (discursive) proclivity should be understood in the contexts of these schools' opening. Outside the possible influence of various founding principals' Christian or Hindu philosophies of social justice, all three schools emerged during the decades of nationalist and post-colonial missions of self-sufficiency, service, and an increased awareness of class, caste, gender, and minority inequalities, including the beginning stages of India's women's

movement, not to mention this inclination's ties with certain long-standing practices of elite patronage or philanthropy. But perhaps most importantly, the supposed "duty" of the privileged to uplift the conditions of the marginalized is in itself located in the very rationalizations founding India's first all-girls' Public Schools – for the "emancipation" of upper-caste women by way of access to a formal education.

> **Welham alum:** It taught me many other things for which I am grateful. Minor ones like how to make my bed with hospital corners and not to be fussy about food. Major ones like getting along with all sorts of people, the sharing of and compromising for true friendship and having confidence to be myself, and for the space and time and training it gave me while I was growing up. *We absorbed from the freedom as well as the disciplines of Welham, a balance, an ethical framework and a sense of what it meant to be contemporary, Indian and a woman*. (Akbar 2007:116, emphasis added)

Concluding Thoughts:
Change as Progress, Loss, Balance, Stasis

The first all-girls' Public Schools were as much venues of change as venues for coping for and against change. At all three schools, girls experienced varying degrees of adjustment in order to prepare themselves for shifting times post-independence, alterations which took form and were received in complex ways. In some respects, the preparation provided by these schools appeared to simply reinforce patriarchal structures and practices reborn for a new nation (*e.g.* creating "modern" and contributing housewives, hostesses, and mothers to meet new preferences for arranged marriages), while in other instances their contributions arguably created more confident, knowledgeable, and individualized women who could work and succeed at a job outside the home. Compared to other "types" of schools, they were sites for preserving traditions, the perfect balance of "East" and "West," while at the same time feared as sites of

eroding traditions, disappearing values, over Westernization, and an essentialized (and romanticized) "Indianness." This dialogic relationship with change (as progress and/or loss) is seen throughout this chapter as institutional and individual engagement with discourses and practices of "keeping-while-giving."

Those connected to these schools today hold that the circumstances of their founding, their visions, character, and traditions which made them renowned throughout the country and in some cases globally, have survived over the decades, informing their current philosophies toward girls' education. Yet, ever in a relationship with the outside, these schools have contributed and have responded to more recent changes, particularly of globalization, economic liberalization, and privatization which in terms of education have seen a rise in credentialization and competition, a proliferation of private schools and tutoring centers, reform policies opening "elite" schools up to marginalized populations, and a particular relationship with (inter)national women's empowerment agendas. In this environment, in somewhat similar fashion to the conditions and anxieties of their founding and early decades post-independence, the loss of purported school traditions, values, and character (*e.g.* morality, selflessness, and discipline) has become a point of concern voiced by some nostalgic alumnae as well as by current parents, administrators, teachers, and even students. MGD, SKV, Welham Girls', and now Mayo Girls' have met with and initiated change in various and often dissimilar ways. Methods of present-day adjustment and school rhetoric for or against change have at times invoked school origins, founding discourses of difference, and initial approaches to girls' education in their defense. As opined by a current SKV administrator, for example,

"A lot depends on the vision with which these schools were started by their founders. That is the individual difference between these schools and that vision continues to effect the

output today even if it was many years ago. The visions with which let's say a Welham Girls' was started were very different from Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya. And the two were started a year apart. We came a year earlier in '56 and they were in '57. They were started by, uh, an English lady, Miss Linnell…and she was the guiding force. Miss Oliphant had already established the boys' school and she was kind of at the end of her career when the girls' school came along, but the vision of Welham Girls' was to churn out girls that would be taking on leadership roles. The vision for the girls at Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya was that they would be girls with a lot of culture, who would respect tradition, and maintain traditions. Most leaders unfortunately have to break a lot of traditions. And so that became the difference I think between the two schools."

Three and four generations since the first all-girls' Public Schools opened their doors, they remain symbols of women's emancipation through education, but for whom and what purposes today? As discussed in the next chapter, such questions emerge in tandem with preoccupations and practices over retained status and defining contemporary "eliteness" and "merit" as institutions and in terms of who has and seeks access to today's all-girls' Indian Public Schools.

CHAPTER 2

Accepting an "Elite" Class of Girls: A Discussion of Status, Values, and "Folding-in"

MC: With this idea of preservation, do schools like SKV have difficulty with change in general?

Nitya [SKV admin]: Oh yes. Yes. All. The. Time. I think change is the one constant which is most inconvenient. No change ever comes without some inconvenience, even if it is for the better.

Leaving the dining hall one morning at Mayo College Girls' School, I hurried down the paver stoned pathway lined with trees donated from various other Public Schools toward the back end of campus. It was a considerably chilly Rajasthani morning in February and breakfast had been a good one – brown bread toast with butter, *poha*, chocolate muesli, and a cup of warm, thick chai. Following senior school breakfast, students and teachers typically made their way to morning assembly. While the junior school was holding its meetings on the lawn directly behind the main building's entrance, the senior students lined up at the various entrances to the performing arts building, dropping off their bags and books outside, and organizing themselves by Class level. Teachers and school captains then usually initiated a quiet and purposeful, single-file march into the auditorium, winding snakelike around the wooden floors until in place before the stage. Latecomers rushed in behind and squeezed the lines until called to attention. Today, zigging and zagging through small clusters of students sleepily chatting and meandering toward the main school building, I was halted by a voice over my left shoulder,

"Oi, Meghan! Where are you going in such a hurry?"

Turning, I saw a group of four, 11th Standard students I recognized catching up. I had spent the previous day observing a number of their Humanities classes – English, Sociology,

Psychology, Economics, Art – and was staying in one of their Houses, Charumati, during my time on campus. One student, Vriti, whom I knew to be the school band's bassist explained,

"There's no assembly today; junior school interviews. Look over there," gesturing to the auditorium.

She was right. The front of the building was a flurry of activity. *Chowkidars* [school security guards] directed cars manned by bored drivers to drop-off and parking locations, Mayo teachers and administrators hustled in and out of the auditorium with bundles of papers, *bai jis* offered cups of water on trays to visitors. Huddles of parents – mothers dressed in *saris* or "modern" suits and fathers in everything from slacks and sweaters to more formal attire fit with Nehruvian vests – stood outside waiting with their 11-year old daughters. Some were accompanied by elder daughters or nieces, Mayoites in their own right. While a few appeared nervous – whiling their time straightening their daughter's hair or adjusting her outfit – others seemed excited or nostalgic, taking in the campus's colonial style buildings and well-manicured desert lawns and fountains, shaking hands and talking with other parents, friends or colleagues, perhaps from their own Public School days.

"I heard Priyanka Gandhi's daughter is interviewing today," another of my 11th Standard friends said while looking on to the scene.

Inside, the auditorium was dotted with 30 or so interview set-ups, five to six plastic chairs arranged around small tables set with bottles of water, drinking glasses, and decorative coasters. Each in turn, families were called into the building and assigned to a circle of chairs, joined after a few minutes by a Mayo administrator and/or teacher, prepared with the applicant's file.

One of my fellow onlookers recalled that her parents were asked questions about their occupations and where they went to school. Another remembered how she was asked to make up

a story based on a picture she was given on a piece of paper. “I swear they were just trying to figure out if I could speak English,” she said.

“They asked me what I would plant on a terrace. I don’t have a terrace! Are you kidding? So I just named all the flowers I could think of. Who has a terrace?” offered another.

A few were asked why they wanted to come to Mayo or why they were thinking of choosing a particular Stream. “I just started talking about Pink Floyd. Luckily, the Vice Principal also likes Pink Floyd so we mostly just talked about that the whole time,” recalled Vriti.

As our conversation died down, the students continued on to their rooms for the start of their Class teacher’s period, eager to receive their daily personal copies of *The Times of India*. Lingering on, I thought of the scene a few months prior on MGD’s campus, where young boys and girls sat for the “Aptitude/Proficiency Assessment” for Mayo College, Mayo Girls’, Scindia, and SKV, a three-hour long endeavor testing their skills in English, Hindi, and Math. A few of these schools, including Welham Girls’, also had a fourth written test on life-skills that assessed applicants’ general awareness through reasoning and puzzles. On the 7th Standard entrance exam that year, for example, students were asked to write 20-25 lines in English on prompts such as: (a) “‘Now that there is a television set in almost every room in every house, family members have stopped having interesting conversations with each other;’ write your views about this statement;” and (b) “Imagine that you have to write an article for a travel magazine about a place which you think is good for tourists to visit. Describe the place but also remember to include some advice about the journey, places to stay, and what all to carry to make the most of the trip.” Such scenes and requirements left me wondering, what did it take to gain access to today’s all-girls’ Public Schools, who applied, and why? What was at stake?

❖

According to the IPSC's *Articles of Association*, the primary aim of these schools today is "to prepare students of ability for positions of service and responsibility in all walks of national life." Whereas matters of "service and responsibility" echo purported aims since their founding, the emphasis on "students of ability" in comparison to providing "girls of a particular class, education befitting their status" is new, if not rhetorically. It identifies these schools as again fit for a specific type of student albeit this time through narratives of merit. In the decades post-independence, particularly from the 1980s onward, Indian Public Schools, their clientele, means of access, and approaches to education, became fodder for debates over elitism, class and caste privilege, exclusion, and inequality. They were simultaneously heralded as institutions of quality education, offering much sought-after tags of prestige, while chastised as venues of concretized inequality and upper-class separatism. While the all-girls' schools have admittedly experienced less criticism compared to their brother schools given their emancipatory histories and lower fees, they still engage with critiques, reforms, and applicants that challenge school identities and purported purposes. Individually considered by families as sites of change or preservation, exposure or gendered protection, related concerns over elitism influence who applies and why, as well as admissions discourses and practices of avoiding or folding-in the "new;" wherein invocations of merit suggest both "openness" and work as gatekeepers in an environment where more diverse occupational classes are economically capable and the socio-economically marginalized are governmentally deemed deserving of access.

The criteria by which one might identify a given school as elite are "usually vague and elusive, partly related to the fact that different schools have different aims, serve different constituents, and are defined in relation to different reference groups of schools" (Gaztambide-

Fernández 2009:1091). There is also the fact that those who benefit the most from the existence of elite schools are also the ones who often "have the power to support and to some extent define what makes schools elite and presumably have the most to gain from the vagueness of this definition" (*ibid.*). As a few MGDians put it to me, you have to be "of a certain class" or "pedigree," to identify and then distinguish between elite schools in India correctly (or to even care to do so). Calling anything elite is usually "a rhetorical move made to put forth a certain argument, usually in admiration or condemnation of particular institutions" or peoples (*ibid.*:1092). Gaztambide-Fernández (2009) has examined what exactly defines an elite boarding school and the characteristics that set them apart from other schools in significant ways. In doing so, he outlined five criteria by which these schools can be identified: "(a) typologically elite, based on their identification as "independent schools;" (b) scholastically elite, based on both the expansive and sophisticated curricula they offer and their particular pedagogical approaches; (c) historically elite, based on the role of elite networks and their historical development; (d) geographically elite, based on their physical character and location; and lastly, (e) demographically elite, based on the population that attends elite boarding schools" (*ibid.*:1093). For him, the combination of these five dimensions is crucial to determining the "ideal type."[33] In considering my four school sites, one could reflect on any one of these criteria and not find them wanting. Their national annual rankings listed in the magazine, *Education World* (valued similarly to those of *U.S. News & World Report*), as among India's top three girls' residential schools and within the top seven girls' day schools from 2012-2015,[34] frequently served as

[33] Gaztambide-Fernández (2009) is dealing particularly within a United States context.
[34] Rankings are determined by scores along 15 parameters including teacher welfare and development, competence of faculty, academic reputation, co-curricular education, sports education, life skills education and conflict management, individual attention to students, leadership management quality, safety and hygiene, infrastructure provision, internationalism, pastoral care, value for money, and community service (also with a column for CISCE/CBSE exam average).

popular proof of this designation. However, the ever more crowded private school landscape bulging with sophisticated infrastructure and financial muscle, the increasing popularity of co-ed schools and international Boards, the socio-economic transformations among the "new" middle class, and national educational reform policies for class/caste parity, have challenged some of these definitions of eliteness, particularly in terms of who attends (and applies to) niche, single-sex Public Schools in northern India. Whenever I raised this issue of competition with Public School administrators, they would frequently wave it away as a non-issue, stating that they received more applications than they'd ever have space from those seeking a particular "Public School type" of education. Or, as offered by one school's vice principal,

"We don't see it as competition. Those who want to come to us will come to us. Those who want to come are welcome."

However, statements like these often veiled efforts made by these schools through specific recruitment and admissions practices to mediate or resist competition as well as commonly voiced anxieties over the supposedly changing face of all-girls' Public Schools.

Though the cultural capital available among upper-tier private schools may have converged, I found social and symbolic capital available at Public Schools still resonated among two "types" of students and their families, particularly. For one, a sizable percentage of "those who want to come" are from families with a tradition of sending their daughters to a Public School. 36.31% of surveyed students in Classes 9-12 were *not* the first in their families to attend their particular Public School. Though sizable, note that the percentage of all-girls' school legacies is not the majority. At Welham Girls' School, for example, 59.09% (n=143) of senior students said they were the first in their family to attend the school. However, out of that percentage 47.55% (n=68) said that a male relative had graduated from one of the two affiliated

boys' school. Similarly at Mayo Girls', 22.56% of the 62.74% that said they were the first to attend MCGS had relatives at either Mayo Boys' or Scindia. One administrator at SKV proffered that this pattern exists because women still usually move to the locations of their husband's families after marriage, resulting in sons and daughters attending their paternally-affiliated schools. Taking into consideration which families have a tradition of sending their children to a Public School regardless of gender, therefore, the legacy factor becomes much higher at 60.79%.

As suggested by a student of Mayo Girls', "If you have a tradition in your family of attending, it's kind of…I dunno, built into you? You've heard stories or visited the school with your sisters and brothers. I didn't want to come at first, but it seemed to fit when I got here."

This statement mirrors reproduction theories that argue for the seamless alignment between upper-class home life and that of their schools. "Fit" is itself a term commonly used in Public School evaluations of candidacy. While MGD has certain quotas in its admissions lotteries set aside for sisters or daughters of MGDians, all four schools noted that even if there wasn't anything official for legacies in the process, they tended to consider these applicants with a tinge of favoritism according to such determinations of fit. Yet, despite the SKV administrator's suggested explanations for why girls tend to attend their father's Public School over their mother's, I found that 70.24% (n=144) of *male* senior students surveyed at Mayo Boys' and Scindia also identified as first generation Mayoites and Scindians (10.42% of these had sisters or mothers graduate from sister schools). An explanation for this high percentage of first-time all-girls' Public School goers *and* first-time all-boys' Public School goers, I posit, is a recent influx of students coming to these schools from more diverse family backgrounds in terms of region, social class, and caste affiliation.

Given their purportedly historic eliteness, pedigreed brand, and proposed culturally rooted education, all-girls' Public Schools are considered conveyers of a certain status to the daughters of "the arrived" or newly economically capable. It is this second "type" of family that I argue also still looks specifically to Public Schools to gain a specific kind of social capital not available through their newer, unaffiliated counterparts. While Marx argued that highly stratified class societies are shaped by the struggle for political and economic supremacy, it was Weber (1946) who importantly contended that this acquisition of raw political and economic power is meaningless without the coordinated attainment of "status honor." The catch of course is someone else has to confer status, for honorific self-appraisals reek as counterfeit. Indian Public Schools, as "status systems" determining the rules for the distribution of prestige in a relatively autonomous fashion (Sauder 2006), serve this end for many of these aspirational families. Passing out from a Public School suggests you were subject to a certain kind of training and grooming, an inculcation of specific upper-class values and discipline, recognized and rewarded by those who matter in Indian society.

Yet, it is at this level of values, attitudes, and expectations that contradictions are thought to arise in the experiences of students, at odds with life at home. Although many of these families choose all-girls' Public Schools for their daughters because they believe they will provide the best alignment between their upwardly mobile aspirations and their more traditional values, parents are sometimes caught off-guard and must be "coached" by their daughters or the school. In the face of anxiety, there becomes a need for mediation or the production of multiple spheres of a coherent self. Some girls, as we will explore in this chapter, express engaging in mediations of "feeling split" between "dual personalities," while Public Schools as *institutions*, I argue, are also consistently in dialogue with such supposed contradictions – forced to negotiate

their own aims and identity with those of their diverse parental clientele. As morality, discipline, and merit are frequently conflated with upper-class/caste *values*, legitimizing their power and place in Indian society, these shifts in patronage and admissions processes have been differently accepted by those associated with SKV, Mayo, Welham, and MGD, an experience one principal likened to walking a "peculiar tightrope."

Veena Das (1994:53) has argued that the narrative of an individual life becomes a process in which the outside is folded in to form the interior of the individual, thus integrating conflicting institutions such as family (understood by Das as tradition) and school (understood by Das as modernity). This process of folding in is experienced by many students and the schools themselves. At the end of the day, Public Schools as *private* institutions only have contemporary status or value as long as they continue to be in-demand. As suggested by Graeber (2013:226), "Insofar as value is social, it is always a comparison; value can only be realized in other people's eyes." Public Schools must therefore mediate and absorb various socio-economic trends affecting who applies and why, for prestige is built not only out of institutional selectivity but on the diversity and numbers of candidates selecting to apply. As the characteristics and family backgrounds of "students of ability" and "those who wish to come" to all-girls' Public Schools continue to evolve, these schools have to evolve as well, walking that "peculiar tightrope" between the internal and external.

As such, this chapter, while very much about admissions, is much more about some of the greater issues at stake – the macro-ideologies that structure societal divisions of region, class, and caste in North India as related to access and social mobility as well as the micro-processes at work in Indian Public School admissions that (sub)consciously construct notions of collective identity and mediate discourses of inclusivity. As institutions established in regards to various

imperial and developmentalist projects of modernity, community, and "rights" through the figures of upper-class/caste girls, how such institutions engage with contemporary discourses determining who "deserves" access to such purported schools of empowerment is telling – in how they engage in "open" door policies of equal access or undermine such missions through classist or casteist anxieties and practices of exclusion, assembled through familiar narratives of "fit," "merit," and "autonomy." By examining the topics of *regionality*, *social class*, and *caste* in terms of all-girls' Public School discourses of self and current student body profiles, then, this chapter specifically asks: (1) How do these schools and their students interact with definitions and embodiments of "eliteness;" (2) Who are the contemporary female "elite" that apply; (3) How do these schools determine what kind(s) of students they accept; and (4) How do school admissions procedures and students interact with their own, societal, and familial discourses of diversity, morality, merit, and status?

Regional Diversity:
The "All-India" Character of a North Indian Majority

In their efforts to work against presumption of elitism, Public Schools often work hard to claim that the demographics of their student bodies are more diverse than they sometimes are. Advertising an "All-India" character not only asserts Public Schools' far-reaching renown with families from all over the country and abroad but their outward endorsement of democratic ideals such as inclusivity and merit. The term frequently graced the websites and recruitment materials of all four schools, arguing that students at these schools learn to adjust by living with others from diverse economic, regional, national, language, and religious backgrounds and are better for it. Here, in contrast to local day-schools, they gain exposure, opportunities, and choices that better prepare them to adapt to a mobile, (inter)national life after graduation. Diversity is in this

sense reclaimed as an "elite" attribute. Such questions of student geographic origins, whether All-India, international, local, North Indian, metro, or small-town, however, often arose in larger debates concerning related family values in dialogue with Public School character and prestige. Aspects of these origins not only influenced why students attended, what they and their families found appealing, but also how these wants, values, and practices were thought to align with purported school missions and ideologies, figuring into everyday institutional practices as well as admissions and recruiting decisions.

North India Character and Small-Town Rising: "Problems" and "Mentalities"

Though they serve a more regionally assorted set of students than local schools due to their boarding capacities, far less than an All-India representation, the overwhelming majority of students at these four schools come from North India. Of the 1,025 students in grades 9-12 surveyed in 2014, 82.42% (n=839) self-identified as being from a North Indian state (*see* Appendix B). With MGD and Mayo both located in the same state, it's no surprise that the highest percentage of students were from Rajasthan at 32.51%, followed by Uttar Pradesh (UP) at 19.25%, and then Madhya Pradesh (MP) at 8.74% (the location of SKV). "North India" as a *cultural* region includes the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh (HP), Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, UP, MP, and Bihar as well as the city/union territory of Chandigarh and the national capital/union territory of Delhi. Similarities according to linguistics, religious majorities, and caste affiliations as well as feudal/colonial histories and collective practices, family structures, and values influencing political affiliations, education, economics, and women's rights connect these somewhat geographically spread out states into one categorical

"North Indian" zone. Eight of the nine total all-girls' Public Schools are located in the North[35] – two in Uttarakhand, four in Rajasthan, one in Haryana, and one in MP. While the historic needs for these schools were established in the last chapter, regionally-rooted values and conservative practices also make these schools still relevant today. Within the much-considered North-South debate in India, the North is frequently painted as conservative, Hindu, Hindi-speaking, and socially "backwards" in comparison to the more prosperous, educated, and liberated South (*see* Appendix C for statistical data on North India's sex ratios, literacy rates, enrollment rates, etc.). Theories explaining the existence of and reasoning behind the North-South disparity in progress, development, modernity, liberalism, or whatever you want to call it are many, though not necessarily generalizable. Some point to the North's patched history as the stage of invasions and socio-political upheavals, shifts in power often capitalized through the control of and violence enacted upon women, others to its Hindu majority and affiliated caste-based practices as the region today exists within what is popularly considered the Hindutva belt of states that favor Hindu nationalism (often through political parties such as the BJP, RSS, etc.) (Forbes 1996; Lal 1994, 2005, 2013). Then there are those who consider the North's largely rural, agricultural lifestyle, dependent on the whims of the rainy seasons, as a reason why "modernity come so late to the North," with girls more likely to be viewed as economic commodities and/or liabilities (Oldenburg 2002). Much of this sets the tone for why these schools persist and how regional characteristics or trends lend themselves to constructing these schools as both venues of girls' empowerment and progress as well as sites of preserved traditional conservatisms.

[35] Those not included in this study include Ashok Hall Girls' School, Uttarakhand (1993); Mody School, Rajasthan (1989); Vidya Devi Jindal School, Haryana (1984); Rajmata Krishna Kumari, Rajasthan (1992); and Kittur Rani Channamma, Karnataka (1969). The latter is the sole South Indian all-girls' IPSC School, a military (*sainik*) school for women established by an Indian queen who took up arms against the British. In a recent interview, the Doon School Headmaster was quoted saying, "It is a strong possibility that our next 10-year plan up to 2030 could see a school for girls coming up," a Doon School for Girls most likely located in the South.

Speaking with a senior history teacher at Welham Girls', originally from the Eastern state of West Bengal, I asked why she described the North as having a comparably conservative character.

"Because modernity came so much later," she offered.

"Even though Delhi became the capital of the Raj eventually?"

"Right, but *only* eventually," Ms. Bansuri clarified. "And Delhi didn't really develop as a city until the late 70s or post-independence. But modernity, whatever it was, under the British, whatever type of modernity it was, came to Bengal first…you see?…As it did in South India. So it didn't come here until…I mean there are colleagues of mine [at Welham Girls'] who may have been the first or second generation literates in their families whereas I can go back and say, what [counts on fingers], maybe eight generations of my family have been literate, educated."

She explained that this was why so many early all-girls' Public School teachers were brought up from the South as they were more likely to be educated and fluent in English.

It was acknowledged that some parents today make the decision to send their daughters to an all-girls' boarding school for reasons of gendered separatism. As such, administrators and teachers stated that they often have to balance institutional goals or values that may include co-ed activities, off-campus travel, male teachers, and students' wants with those of their parental patrons. One constant gripe among students was that they wished they had more interaction with boys, especially with those at their brother schools. Mayo Girls' constantly cribbed about their three, highly-monitored annual functions with Mayo Boys', SKVians lamented barely seeing their brothers or cousins at Scindia, senior Welhamites confessed looking forward to their senior bi-monthly lunches with the Doscos known as the "AMS" or "awkward meeting society," and MGDians vied to participate in inter-school competitions and co-ed coaching classes for the

chance to interact with the opposite sex. But, as detailed by Nitya, an SKV administrator, Public School flexibility and innovation are commonly restrained by parental considerations and/or the "traditionalist" concerns of the school's Board of Governors. In our discussions of these student complaints, for instance, she stated that as an administrator of a private school where families apply and then pay for a certain type of education, you have to meet parents where they are.

"I normally try and do whatever is reasonable and whatever is in my power to meet whatever the girls are asking me to do and I thought it would be a good idea for the boys and girls to maybe work together on a project and then have a meal outside together but it didn't go down too well with my governing body and I didn't want to take that risk. Again because I don't want this change to be the reason I am remembered. Also, I have to be mindful of the fact that though we are providing a service to the girls it is actually the parents who have put them here. If they had a vision for their daughter to study at a co-ed school, there are hundreds of schools, why did they select a single gender school? So I need to respect that. Many of them come from families and regions, small towns, where such frequent interactions [with boys] are frowned upon. It becomes a matter of reputation."

This required a kind of balance, of valuing and representing a certain North Indian identity, a character and culture to be celebrated, but also differentially folding-in and pushing back against other practices or values deemed in disjunction with certain Public School missions or approaches. To that end, Nitya pointed out an important qualifier echoed by a number of informants – that all-girls' Public Schools were not simply *regional* solutions, as venues valuing "northern" traditions or responding to a "North India problem," but more recently experiencing and responding to regionality's *intersections* with perceived "small town mentalities." Here

again we see a push and pull between institutional responses honoring concerns over safety and access to quality schools in conjunction with mediating values and mentalities deemed "other."

Given class backgrounds and the advertised "All India" make-up of IPSC schools, one might assume, as I did early on, that most students of these all-girls' Public Schools came from India's metros, Tier I cities[36] like Delhi (pop. 16.7 million[37]), Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, and Bangalore. Although each school did have a proportion of girls coming from these cities, especially from Delhi and Kolkata, I found the vast majority hailed from Tier II towns in North India – cities as large as Ahmedabad (pop. 5.5 million), Lucknow (pop. 4.5 million), Jaipur (pop. 3.0 million), Kanpur (pop. 2.7 million), Gwalior (pop. 2.0 million), Agra (pop.1.5 million), or Chandigarh (pop. 1.0 million), and as small as Guwahati in Bihar (pop. 960,000), Ajmer in Rajasthan (pop. 550,000), Orai in UP (pop. 187,000), or Dabra in MP (61,000). Though a now sizable number of quality private schools, even co-ed Public Schools, in the metros means that fewer students are leaving to attend other Public Schools, the rise in economic prominence of northern India's small-towns since the 1990s means that it was primarily these students, coming from the Guwahatis and Dabras of India or the Northeastern regions in general (*i.e.* Assam, Sikkim, Meghalaya, and Nagaland), economically capable, upwardly mobile, but surrounded by sub-par infrastructure, who expressed a need to leave home in search of a "good," "safe" school for girls. Yet, it was commonly these students from such small towns in North India that described their experiences at school as at odds with their families' values and expectations at home. As offered by Priya, an MGD boarder and field

[36] Under the Sixth Central Pay Commission in 2008, A-1 cities were changed to X (Tier I) cities (including Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore). A, B-1, and B-2 were changed to Y (Tier II) cities (*e.g.* Ahmedabad, Pune, Jaipur, Kanpur, Lucknow, Indore, Surat, Gandhinagar); B-1 were changed to Y cities (*e.g.* Bhopal, Rajkot, Agra, Meerut); B-2 were changed to Y cities (*e.g.* Varanasi, Allahabad); and C and unclassified changed to Z cities (Tier III). Other categorical systems such as the Reserve Bank of India created "tiered" classes of cities. Metros are those with a population of 1 million or above; Class 1 cities have a population of 100,000 and above; Class 2 cities have 50,000-99,999; Class 3 cities have 20,000-49,999; and Class 4 cities have 10,000-19,999.
[37] All population data was taken from the 2011 Government of India Census.

hockey player, one December evening while we sat on the outdoor stadium steps watching girls practicing for the school's up-coming Sport's Day, "I feel as though I'm two people, one here and one at home." Coming from a "very conservative" family in small-town UP, she lamented over how last year she was invited to play in the IPSC Nationals for field hockey in Bangalore, but her father would not let her go as it would have required her to travel on the train alone.

"What I wear, going out to meet friends, how I speak, it's all different at home," she stated. "We might say things are equal and we are getting a great education and opportunities and whatever, but at the end of the day, there's still that mindset, those unspoken preferences. You can't even see them anymore, they're just there, built into your life. And at the end of the day, you still have to go home."

In this narrative, Priya describes inhabiting two overlapping worlds – that of school and that of home. In her case, the school represents certain freedoms and opportunities not available or allowed when she is with her family in UP. Despite the fact that both her hockey coach and a teacher at school called her parents to try and convince them to change their decision, her parents were firm in their concern over her safety and movements alone in public as a girl.

Kushboo, an 11th Standard student at Welham Girls', shared similar experiences of misalignment, stating that these felt-differences between school and home culture were true of "so many of [her] classmates."

"They get really frustrated," she admitted. "They don't know how to express themselves. There are people who can't wear certain things because they come from a small town. So here, they do whatever makes them happy. Someone who's an ace basketball player here, back in [their] town there are limits. I mean, here I can visit friends on campus. But if my friends came to visit me in Bombay and they called me up and wanted me to go out, my parents would think 10

times before letting me. They will say no. So it's not that in big cities you have a lot of freedom. If you're sent to this school from a small town then obviously their [sic] parents have a different mentality. Everything's interconnected. If you don't like the way a boy's acting, you transmit that to his business. That's how it works. We make random and far links. Like, if you don't like what I'm wearing, then it's connected back to my family or what school I'm going to. The mind works in crazy ways."

Kushboo offers two interesting turns here. In describing the impacts of and relationships between home-town and family values on individual feelings of freedom, independence, and identity, she momentarily *dismisses* the divide between small-town and metro. The formerly proposed values-based chasm between the two is surpassed by parents' seemingly universal concern for daughters' safety and determinations of opportunity. Relatedly, one Welham administrator responsible for admissions counseling stated,

"The parents from the metros want their kids *out* of the metros. So there's one section of parents who say that the peer group there in the metros is not what they want their daughters growing up with. Then there are the ones who come from very small towns and see no opportunities there. They think our daughter is good, we can see she is talented, but at home there are no such teachers, how will she get everything she needs under one roof?"

Knowing this, all-girls' Public Schools place special emphasis on security, and note that this is a particularly gendered concern. An SKV administrative officer submitting,

"SKV is a brand name now. And people come here because a lot of safety and security is over here. So everybody wants that this is a totally and completely girls school. See, the principal is a lady principal, a lady vice principal, myself an administrative officer. We have hardly two or three employees who are male employees. Leaving apart the drivers and the staff, it's all girls.

Parents they come and inquire about…check with me about the safety and security. We have outsourced security which is at the front gate. You must have noticed that. When you go out you have to sign out. Whenever you come you have to check in. We have CCTV cameras all over."

In 2013, Mayo Girls' also installed video cameras around its campus for similar reasons. As in Priya's discussion of her field hockey tournament, travel off-campus also presented similar constraints for female students. Students regularly lamented how Welham Boys' and Doon allowed their student to go off-campus into the city for monthly, nine-hour outing days while students at Welham Girls' were only allowed announced visitors on-campus or required an adult chaperone to go off-campus.

There are then those girls who come from home environments where they claim to have *more* freedom and independence than what they experience at school, an outcome perhaps of the extra efforts within all-girls' schools to meet the needs of concerned parents. Phone calls are limited to approximately seven minutes on average per week, set on a specific day and at specific times with the House Matron sitting close by as they call out to one of three to five pre-screened numbers. Mobile phones are not allowed on campus (although it was common knowledge that the vast majority of senior students had them hidden away in their dorm rooms) and internet use is monitored. Though these rules fit with certain Public School approaches to simplicity and teaching students to adjust, they also represent recognition of particular parents' wants.

From regional variations to small-town mentalities we arrive at a discussion of the *local* and the *(inter)national* wherein the values placed on each end up reflecting narratives of diversity, prestige, and mission built into school admissions procedures and their All-India identity.

Local Duty and (Inter)National Prestige: The Day Scholar-Boarder Debate in Admissions

Institutional philosophies born out of the visions of all-girls' Public School founders and founding principals have influenced the varied levels of importance placed on local duty versus building an All-India character when creating their student body profiles. Admitting a large number of girls from nearby towns or directly from the city through a partial day-scholar component is something MGDians often tout as representative of their school's particular historic duty in educating the girls of Rajasthan, diversifying their student body in terms of social class, and helping keep fees low. Having their doors comparably "open," however, has also caused difficulties not experienced at the fully boarding schools like Mayo, Welham, and SKV. Furthermore, narratives of institutional prestige and status frequently accompany having an (inter)national draw of students and the ability to keep fees higher, something residential Public Schools can achieve more readily than a day-cum-boarding model.

As stated earlier, a residential schooling model naturally encourages heightened regional diversity among its applicants. Connectedly, elite schools frequently profit from an increase in status and reputation the more diverse their pull of students. Though small in number, Public Schools and their population of (upper-)middle class patrons are understood as representative of the nation, its progress, and where it can go. By claiming an "All-India" character they construct images of democratically inclusive system wherein their students could be anyone from anywhere, "merit" pending. Even though we know these schools are highly North Indian in character, that does not take away the fact that their students are getting the opportunities to interact with girls from towns, cities, states, and countries other than their own, something they wouldn't necessary experience in a local day-school. Across the senior students surveyed, 25 Indian states were represented along with 12 foreign countries (*see* Appendix B). International

students counted for 3.24% of girls surveyed, with the highest percentage coming from Nepal (2.06%). Mayo Girls' and Welham Girls' had the largest number of students from outside India at 7.14% and 5.00% respectively followed by SKV at 1.25% and MGD at 0.91%. Several of these students coming from outside the country, being mainly Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), stated that their parents sent them abroad for school in order to give them an "Indian" educational experience, to get in touch with their culture, their roots, an education perhaps more "Indian" than what they would have received in a hometown school located in Detroit, Abu Dhabi, or the Copper Belt of Zambia.

This "All-India" Public School ideology, captured strongly today by Mayo Girls' and Welham Girls' (inter)nationally diverse student bodies, at times comes up against the original missions of some of these schools, born out of a desire to emancipate *local* girls through education. MGD, SKV, and Welham all started as largely day-boarding schools, very local, admitting girls from nearby families through word-of-mouth, reputation, and family networks. Whereas SKV and Welham later converted to completely residential schools, MGD evolved over the years to include more and more day-scholars (in 2014, the ratio was approximately 3:1 day-scholar to boarder). As a result of its day-school component, MGD has a particularly high representation of local Jaipurites (68.6% of senior students surveyed are from Jaipur), whereas only 10.4% of Welhamites are from Dehradun, 9.2% of SKVians are from Gwalior, and 3.3% of Mayoites are from Ajmer. In my conversations with school stakeholders, a number of MGD Board Members, faculty members, and students stood by their duel day-cum-boarding school model, calling it a positive and essential aspect of the school's character, a duty to uphold:

> **Prachi [MGD student]:** The goal of MGD has always been to emancipate and serve the girls of Jaipur and Rajasthan. It's always had a local quality to it and a dedication to the girls of Jaipur from the beginning.

MC: Do you think it would be better if the school was all boarding?

Smriti [MGD Board Member, 1957]: No. Why deprive the people of Jaipur from going to a beautiful school? And not everyone can afford boarding.

Seen as a more inclusive approach to elite schooling, MGD's day-cum-boarding model allows for greater regional diversity (via the boarding aspect), class diversity (via the cheaper day-school fees), and a continued connection to its local city. Yet it also creates headaches not experienced by many fully boarding Public Schools. Given the increased diversity according to class background, the daily loss of control over a large group of students when they go home after school hours, and the possibility of a larger student body not dependent on a set number of dorms or beds, the teaching of certain collective values needs to be stronger in order to bring the students up into a "homogeneous thing," as it was put by one early MGD alumna. She continued,

"I think the girls have changed [since my time] mostly because the input of the girls is different…the input meaning the kids that are coming from different backgrounds from my time. …Now the backgrounds are very diverse. In our time it was more homogeneous. So that was much different. It was much easier to treat one class of people than people from all different backgrounds, and I mean, we've got 2,000 to 3,000 kids [now]! So they are from all classes. Every class is there and that's OK. They're paying the fees, so that's alright. But then [in order to] bring them up into a homogeneous thing I think that the ethics should be *very* strong. Diversity is important. And being global is important in these times, but it's also important for a school to give back to, uhm…or serve its immediate community."

Although many connect MGD's comparably open approach to admissions to their Indian queen's founding vision of *universal* female emancipation, friends admit that towards the end of Maharani Gayatri Devi's life she became fatigued with the changing nature of MGD's clientele.

She saw the fact that there were more day-scholars than boarders symbolic of the school's *lack* of impact on the girls' cultivation and was frustrated by the increasing pressure on the school to meet the whims and fancies of local parents. I was told by one alumna and family friend of the Rajmata that she specifically lamented the change in overall "character" of MGDians, resulting in the current would-be princess of Jaipur attending Mayo Girls' instead of MGD.

It was for some of these very reasons that SKV was converted into a completely residential school in the early '90s – things became too complicated; you couldn't control the types of families gaining admissions as much; you could not fully cultivate your charges with a collective sense of identity or values; there was a greater strain on teachers; there became a division between day-scholars and boarders; and you ended up spending all your time worried about transportation, scheduling, and once again, girls' safety, offered many administrators and teachers. However, when I asked MGDians if they thought their school could ever or should ever make the switch to all-boarding like SKV most senior boarders adamantly answered, "No." Some stated that while MGD perhaps *should* become completely boarding for various reasons, it could not happen as "change happens very slowly at MGD" and is often met with anger and protestation by students, faculty, and alumnae who claim such changes are "ruining school traditions" and attempting to alter the school's identity, changing it into something it isn't. These very sentiments of dissent were expressed a few years back when the current principal decided to change the boarding system from Class-based to House-based (*i.e.* a mix of all Class levels in each dorm) to which one 12th Standard student-leader stated in condemnation, "This isn't SKV; MGD will never be SKV."

Concerned with the changing "quality" of students in recent years, seen as a result of an overall enrollment increase, the growing enrollment of local day-scholars, and the decreasing

number of boarders, MGD's administrators have adjusted their admissions practices. They have lowered the number of students accepted overall in the past few years in an attempt to cut down class sizes. While primary and junior school students earn admission now based on a lottery system, there is some selection devices in play where the admissions of senior students are concerned, based on their 10th grade Board exam scores, Stream choice, and informal interviews. With a want to increase the number of boarding students as well as the regional diversity of the student body as a whole, MGD's Board of Directors and administrators began enacting special, if not "unofficial," quotas. According to one informant on the school's Board,

"Basically if you apply as a boarder, you gain preference in admissions, especially in the senior classes. Boarders are important. They carry a school's identity and we get a more varied class and state representation."

This has also influenced the school's focus on hiring more residential teachers. Schools like MGD, SKV, Mayo, and Welham have together also worked to build the regional diversity of their student bodies through scholarship programs granting a certain number of girls from the North/Northeastern states of Bihar, Sikkim, Assam, etc. the ability to study and live at the schools for a certain number of years. While this speaks to the role of Public Schools in promoting diversity through admissions, it was not uncommon to see or hear these girls made fun of by others on campus. Students would joke about their darker skin or facial features, their poor English skills or accents, or how undeveloped those areas of the country were. When one student invited me to her hometown in Bihar over winter break, for example, another student overhearing the conversation jumped in jokingly, "Why would you ever want to visit that place? It's very backwards. There's nothing even to do." Though these comments were generally made in good fun amongst friends, they still carried messages of belonging, "othering," and status as

related to region, state, town, and who usually attends a Public School. It's important to assess these varied narratives of acceptance. Meeting families "where they are from" in terms of home location speaks to institutional projects of creating an elite class of Public School girls, representative yet selective, as well as family projects of sending daughters to safe, quality, all-girls' boarding schools, understood as purveyors of status yet assumedly "traditional" in all the right ways.

As noted throughout this section, though, regionality, especially the perceived character and influence of small-town North India, cannot be fully understood without the intersections of social class and caste. For Public Schools, alterations in the distribution of applicants' class backgrounds, particularly the increase in upwardly mobile "business families," contribute to on-going narratives concerning the ideological merits of India's middle-classes, as economic prowess weighed against fit in terms of character, morality, and lifestyle.

Class Diversity:
The Upper-class, Middle-class, and Notorious "Business Class"

Mansi [SKV student]: Even though they are being called "Public Schools," the real vast majority of the public does not have access to them. And I feel that until or unless my father has 3 lakh in this pocket this school doesn't care if I score 98% in 9th grade and I want to join the school in my 10th. As soon as my father *pays* the fee I'm in the school. If he doesn't, I'm out of the school. To be frank, I belong to a middle-class family and to keep me here is not as easy a task for my parents. And I know that my father works from 8:00 in the morning to 2:00 at night and that's how he earns and he sends me here. And he has to cut from his desires also. If he wants to buy a car he thinks, no, I have to pay fees for Mansi so I'll buy it next year. So I know he's doing it for me. When I know that tomorrow's the test and I'm feeling sleepy I think no, my father is doing so much for me, and that is how I push myself.

Around independence in 1947, the Indian populace was a tri-fold of stratified classes. At one extreme, you had a handful of rich industrialists and capitalists, the very big *zamindars* and *taluqdars* [landowners], and members of the princely families. At the other extreme was the vast majority of the population – the agricultural poor, unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers, petty clerks and employees such as postmen, constables, soldiers, peons, etc. (Varma 1998:26). In between these two poles existed the "middle-class," a minority at the time not exceeding 10% of the population unified in ideology and aspirations but segmented in terms of income, occupation, and education. Overwhelmingly urban and dominated by the upper castes, the middle-class included "government [servants], qualified professionals such as doctors, engineers and lawyers, business entrepreneurs and the more well-to-do traders, teachers in schools in the bigger cities and in the institutes of higher education, journalists, the partially or fully educated among the middle-level peasantry, the white-collar salariat in the private sector, legislators, and a substantial section of university students" (*ibid.*:26-7). The middle-class business elite post-1947 were much the same as under the British, with no real entrepreneurs in the private sector as of yet. And while the elite and princely classes of the time were known for their ritual pageantry and conspicuous displays of material wealth, conventional theory attributed qualities like balance, prudence, and stability to India's educated middle-class. They saw Gandhi's spartan lifestyle and stance on means before ends as imperative. This, in conjunction with uplifting the impoverished, was considered necessary to nation building (*ibid.*:29-30). Though largely lacking in a middle-class clientele, MGD as the sole all-girls' Public School established at the time, was organized around similar ideologies enacted in a relatively simple and humble school environment devoid of many upper-class comforts. Alumnae argue that it was precisely students' elite class backgrounds that guided Miss Lutter to advocate a version of "middle-class"

nationalistic ideologies on campus. While figures like Gandhi were not supporters of the Public School model partially because they were English medium,[38] such an education did a portion of the middle-class a service under British imperialism as it allowed them greater access to jobs.[39]

As such, Nehru's vision of national progress, of an "awakened India" resistant to external pressures but self-reliant thanks to the creation of a modern industrial economy in favor of technology, science, and Western education, had far greater appeal to an urban-centric middle-class (*ibid.*:53). They became the most porous repository for Western values of democracy and liberalism, merit, morals, and ethics, yet still wary of materialism. Status, and the respect it earned, was not so directly linked to what one owned but to what one did or had achieved (*ibid.*:39-40). While it didn't hurt that the restrictions on imports under the license Raj and emphasis on self-reliance made it so some objects of desire were not readily available, middle-class pursuits of modernity were built around a rational and scientific approach to economic gains and values of equality that ultimately opposed the decadent feudal order and caste system represented by the Indian aristocracy (*ibid.*:41-2). Much of this opposition was seen in the founding missions of the IPSC, particularly in the Doon School and Welham.

This character and moral outlook, though, would change substantially for many in the middle-class over the next few decades in response to India's changing socio-economic and political climate. These trends[40] largely worked to undermine pre-1947 ideologies of merit and hard work for those encouraging favors, nepotism, and any means necessary to get ahead. With the nationalization of banks and the Green Revolution in the mid- to late 1960s, capital became

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[38] For a free India, Gandhi argued that instruction in a mother tongue was warranted as "the foreign medium has made our children practically foreigners in their own land," a message he wrote somewhat ironically in his own English-medium weekly journal, *Young India*, in 1921.
[39] Notably within the much-coveted Indian Civil Services and the field of law.
[40] Varma (1998:89) identified these trends as: (1) the visible retreat of ideology from public life and the corresponding transparency of the quest for power as an end in itself; (2) an erosion of the legitimacy of the state as an effective economic actor (resulting in the reduced sensitivity to the poor); and (3) the legitimization of corruption as an accepted and even inevitable part of society,

available for the first time on a national scale to a large community of entrepreneurs and traders while agricultural production was lifted through land redistribution, new technology, and government support, empowering middle-level farmers to greater levels of capital gain (*ibid.*:94). Bureaucratic red tape, customs, and import licenses encouraged a mushrooming black economy estimated at the time to be almost 50% of the recorded economy made-up of mostly traders and real estate operators (*ibid.*:92-3). Money so quickly gained yet not so easily concealed manifested itself in the material status symbols of an upper-middle class lifestyle, changing consumer practices and leading to more children being sent to better, English medium schools.

At this point, Public Schools like MGD, SKV, Mayo, and Welham had long been home to girls from aristocratic families that outside hereditary royalty, landowners, politicians, professionals, and high-ranking service families included big business families (*e.g.* the industrial and agricultural bourgeoisie) and those among a smaller identifiable strata of entrepreneurs and traders living in expanding urban centers or on rural estates. With Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's moves in 1991 toward liberalizing the economy and privatizing some areas of the government sector, however, small-town North India came to represent an untapped resource – land was cheaper, space unlimited, and the market unsaturated unlike in the cities (LaDousa 2014:5). All of this created enumerable business opportunities for aspirational middle-class families and entrepreneurs in areas such as technology, jewelry, textiles, agriculture, construction, real estate, industry, tourism, hotels, and private (higher) education. Yet, to those exclusivists in the traditional upper-classes, these newly arrived families and particularly those labelled members of the "business class" were often demeaned or put-down as "new money." Differentiated from established titans of the business elite, they become popularly described as lacking in "upbringing," as corrupt, materialistic, selfish, exceedingly conservative or

"traditional," devoid of a cooperative sense of values, morality, or grooming. In their projects of identity production and (upper-)middle class belonging, arguably enacted through things like employment status and the acquisition of status symbols, criticisms similarly arose labelling such practices as merely public performance or "showing off" (Fernandes 2006).

While the emerging middle classes were and are anything but homogenous, and the label links multiple, disparate groups in its modes of membership and display (Kumar 1998:1394), all-girls' Public Schools, as perceived venues of social and cultural capital for the upwardly mobile, have interacted with similar narratives and labels of class difference. In 2013-14, much discussion existed on these campuses, particularly at the levels of school Boards of Directors, administrators, teachers, and Old Girls as to the growing percentages and fit of certain social classes, classes at times dismissed as mere stereotypes, identified as values to coach-out or fold-in, or blamed for perceived changes or loss in school character, discipline, and prestige.

Contemporary Narratives & Figures of Class

In February, an administrator at Welham told me that at a recent Board meeting between the members of Welham Girls', Welham Boys', and Doon they together decided to change the term "business class" to "entrepreneurial class" within their discussions in order to neutralize the stereotypes and embrace a large portion of their patrons. It was seen, she offered, as a way to discuss such families, their needs and impacts on the schools, productively yet dispassionately, bereft of any value-based jargon. For me, however, this language was more about *replacing* negative class-based judgements with more positive ones where "entrepreneurs" became painted as comparably hard-working, deserving, self-starters, and more progressively-minded. It represented just one account of class that arose throughout the year at these four schools.

Through deliberations of attending moralities, frequently tied to levels of parental education, occupation, and consumption practices, informants variously and often contradictorily defined, segregated, and combined these classes, (re)constructing the "ideal" all-girls' Public School student in relation to those at hand and those at other schools. In such ways, similar to rhetoric located in founding school missions, the clientele of Mayo Girls' and Welham Girls' were frequently differentiated from that of MGD and SKV in contemporary discussions.

In order to consider such narratives it is important to first reflect on the actual reported survey data taken from all senior students (*see* Appendix B for comparative sample data between Welham Girls' and SKV). In terms of father's occupation, very little difference was noted between schools whereas claims of a business majority were verified. **70.4% were identified as "businessmen"** with 19% from "big business" firms dealing in real estate, construction, industry, and agriculture and **51.4% in smaller businesses** involving gems, jewelry, textiles, electronics, restaurants, hotels, tourism, furniture, shoe components, bidi leaves, and the like. After business, 20.3% were listed as holding professional careers such as doctors, lawyers, engineers/scientists, politicians/advocates, chartered accountants, bankers, professors/teachers/ school administrators, journalists, or architects; while 9.2% were employed in service jobs such as the Indian Army, Merchant Marines, police, Administrative Services (IAS), Civil Services (ICS), customs, or insurance.[41] In terms of father's highest level of education achieved, **57.9% were reported as having a terminal masters or professional degree**, 24.6% their bachelors, 14.9% a doctorate, and 2.6% had terminally graduated from Class XII. According to these statistics, the highest percentage of fathers regardless of occupation achieved a masters or professional degree (59.8% of businessmen and 53.3% of non); but a difference became apparent in the second most acquired terminal degree – those identified as businessmen had the second

[41] 0.01% listed in other salaried jobs.

highest percentage of terminal bachelor degrees (**32% of businessmen** compared to 7.8% of non) while those in non-business occupations had the second highest percentage of doctorates (4.9% of businessmen compared to **37.9% of non**). These differences in many ways are expected considering the degrees commonly deemed necessary for certain professions, both in India and internationally. However, if you consider this through a further breakdown of the category "businessman," one finds that of those who received a terminal Class XII diploma (**3.4% of businessmen** and 0.9% of non), all reportedly came from big-business families, supporting notions that those in established family businesses depend most on social ties in place of formal educational credentials.

Differences between schools, however, *were* apparent in the student-reported data concerning mothers. Here, **61% were identified as "housewives" or "homemakers" overall**. However, contrary to the supposition put forth by one SKV administrative officer who when asked about the school's student body profile said, "Very rarely from government jobs…mostly business class and from very remote areas; the mothers are not mostly educated," 45.13% of mothers identified as housewives alone had a terminal bachelor degree, 27.8% a master or professional degree, and 3.72% a doctorate. Compared to Welham and Mayo Girls' that reported 48.6% and 48.57% of mothers *not working*, however, SKV and MGD had significantly higher proportions at 75.42% and 71.65%, respectively. 71.9% of these mothers belonged to small business families.[42] In comparison, out of the 37.2% of mothers identified as having full-time or part-time paying careers, **58% were in professional careers**, 31.8% were in business, and 3.9% were in service-related jobs.[43] Included in those professional careers were a high number of teachers (30.8%), doctors (19%), and artists/designers (19.5%), the latter of which often

[42] The next largest percentages were down at 9.5% for those with husbands in government service, 4.9% in engineering, and 4.5% in large-scale industrial/ agricultural/ construction jobs.
[43] 0.3% of mothers were in other salaried jobs.

participated in business ventures as well. Though a proportion reportedly ran their own businesses as self-made entrepreneurs, 52.4% of these women interestingly had husbands in related fields. For example, many women with husbands in architecture, real estate, or construction worked as interior designers while a number of those with husbands in the textile or gem businesses worked as fashion or jewelry designers and boutique owners. Furthermore, of the 31.8% identified as businesswomen, 26.4% were described as "part-time," "helping with" or "in charge of" *part* of the family business in addition to being a homemaker.

In India as elsewhere it is common to keep business within the family[44] as it reduces loss of capital paid to contract/salaried workers and creates a protective atmosphere of trust. It is supported by the Hindu Undivided Family (HUF), which encourages the dissolution of ownership among kin for purposes of tax exemption and evasion, and the joint-family structure. While some informants stated these networks opened up much-desired job and lifestyle opportunities, many others voiced impressions that a certain amount of gendered conservatism or "traditionalism" existed within some of these families that forced daughters (and sons for that matter) into working for their families instead of pursuing separate careers. These comments also made frequent reference to their preoccupations with arranging daughters' marriages relatively quickly after graduation from secondary school.[45] Students regularly told me stories of how they believed business family wives either sat at home idling their time away as housewives, or if they had a job, often worked from the safety of their own homes and/or within the family business per the wants of husbands or in-laws.

> **Lajita [Mayo student]:** Hm…in business class I think there is lesser of [sic] equality.
> **MC:** Why do you think so?

[44] Hence the term "business family" or India's well-known "business houses," represented by the likes of Tata, Ambani, Vedanta, Birla, and Oberoi.
[45] Marriages are commonly along caste lines to other business families to expand or solidify those networks.

L: Because I think most of the time, *most* of the time, I'm not wanting to offend anybody, but it's often the male part of the society which is working and the female part is just sitting at home. They're the business head. The female is just sitting home…spending time…and spending the money if I'm frank. For her it might not be such a happy life. She might get all of the materialistic things she likes, but happiness, not as much.

Saumya [SKV student]: Mostly business class families are caught between the middle-class and the really rich. They are money-minded, but still very conservative in their mindsets. I've seen so many girls at SKV from business class families who already talk about how after 12th graduation, maybe they'll get their MBAs and then get married. Still the mindset is that if the man is the primary earner than the woman doesn't need a job. In Rajasthan, where these sex ratios are the worst, the mindset is even more conservative.

Many of these perceived differences played into institutional or administrative narratives concerning the influences of class on girls' behavior, particularly their levels of discipline, their feelings of disjuncture between home and school, and their future life expectations. For another SKV administrator, these differences really came down to differences in family "culture," cultures that then needed to be negotiated at school.

"I feel that parents of [those] two schools, Mayo and Welham, are to a large extent all educated which may not always be the case at Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya. We have some first generation school-goers. In those schools, a lot of those parents would have already studied in boarding schools and therefore their children are studying there. In both Mayo and Welham there are parents outside business backgrounds. There would be some from the services, even from the defense services, which has an entirely different culture of its own. So the girls from there would bring to the table something from that culture. And all of these have the intention of getting their

daughters to go out and study further and even abroad so they would be mindful that although they have given their choice of an all-girls' school later the girls are going to go into a co-ed or multi-gender atmosphere. In Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya I think the girls will probably go into a more conservative college. A lot of them will go into all-girls' colleges and many will not go beyond their own hometowns where they will go as day students. Not too many go places which are far away from home."

According to an MGD administrator with experiences working at both all-girls' and all-boys' Public Schools across northern India, these orientations frequently influenced student approaches to their education,

"There's often a lack of aspiration or motivation with business families. I've seen students all over the country and boys are even worse discipline-wise in studies. They all know that they'll just probably take over their family business. In Gwalior, you'd go to a shop and there would be a [Scindia] student just sitting there. Girls are a little more dedicated. At least they have aspirations for a while of becoming an engineer or something even if eventually they take up the family business or end up doing whatever their husbands say."

Here, she notes a belief voiced by a number of my informants – that girls often work harder than boys either because school is seen as their only chance for such pursuits before marriage or because academic success may be the only way to convince other parties that it's worthwhile to continue their education or allow them to pursue a job. Many teachers and administrators expressed feeling as though they needed to balance their efforts to support and encourage students in reference to parental expectations and future concerns.

"If I compare with the kind of business class of girls who were in my class when I was a student, a boarder, with the kind of girls I see now," stated an MGD alumna and teacher, "I find

that the business class at that time had money but didn't know what to do with it. Now they have the money and the enlightenment and the knowledge and wherewithal to be able to put it to good use. That's the difference I see which naturally translates into good education for their children. They may be still rooted in a lot of tradition, which is not always a bad thing, but they may be conservative as far as their daughters go because a lot of them have family businesses and therefore joint families. So then it is up to us as educators to be mindful of these cultural rootings so that we don't fill the heads of these girls with a lot of ideas which would be in conflict [with] real life. So that is a very important responsibility that we have. The middle-class certainly is changing as are all other classes, but, their attitude towards their girls is still very, very protective. They would rather not be very adventurous or risk taking as far as the girls are concerned. They may be more so in terms of the boys. Sending the boys for higher education even abroad would be an option that they would consider very seriously which they may not for a girl. Again, perhaps motivated by the kind of sentiment that who knows what type of family she may have to adjust in. So by sending her abroad we fill her mind with a whole lot of ideas which may be in conflict with what she will encounter later. So it may not necessarily be that parents do not have the correct mindset but it is the fear of the future."

Such sentiments consider matters of possible conflict between female students' school and home life, between their present and future circumstances. Though, as noted by the above-quoted teacher, these descriptions of certain social classes, their practices, or "culture," were and are not static, but continue to diversify and evolve, the business classes, entrepreneurial classes, middle classes, upper classes, and everything in between were often made discursive categories differentiated in one instance and collapsed upon each other in the next. And again, much of

these distinctions were made according to the value and fit afforded to parental levels of education, their supposed modernity, and the amount of institutional coaching therein required.

"I'll tell you something," offered Jyoti, a Welham administrator, "there's a difference between a young parent of 2014 and the parent we got in 2000. I would say things have changed *a lot* in a decade. And these young parents are coming in now with their little ones in Class 6, let's say, and you find this young father and mother, even the young entrepreneurs, I won't even bother to call them "business class" or anything like that, but they've got their own businesses and many of them are educated, maybe the mother has gone to a convent school and she's hoping for more for her daughter. All the mothers come and speak of it. The dads are suddenly earning well, they can see things opening up, [and] they want to send their child to a school like Welham. So we have a system of orientation for all the new children [in which] I actually meet every family for 15 or 20 minutes for *every* new child who joins…. What I do is I start a little card for each girl, and I'm the first person they meet at [the] school, they're already admitted but then they have to come and meet me in my office, the parents and their siblings, very often there's a little brother destroying everything in my office but that's fine [laughs], so I actually get the chance to speak to them and ask them what they're hoping for, what they really want the school to give their daughter, why they're putting her in here."

Teachers and administrators regularly held such one-on-one counseling sessions with parents when they first arrived to make sure everyone was on the same page and also throughout the year in case conflict arose between parents and their daughters. These latter conversations ranged from everything academic to career pursuits and marital arrangements. Dayita, a Welham teacher, provided such a story, stating,

"I had a lot of friends from Welham actually when I was growing up. They were people like me – semi-Westernized, upper-middle-class, often socially prominent families, Generals daughters, people like that – but gradually the profile has changed to…I mean, those girls are still coming but largely they are girls from smaller places, often business families, newer families, who are sort of taking their first hesitant steps, if you like, towards modernity and education. And *maybe* they want to send their girls here because a British-type education may make her more desirable on the marriage market. But, it often doesn't work out that way because the girl develops a mind of her own! …I've even mediated in an inter-religious marriage," she laughed. "This girl came from quite a conservative business family of this city and she wanted to marry a Christian boy and she would come to saying, 'What am I going to do ma'am?' and her parents would come in the evening. I'd talk to them, playing both sides, telling the student to be patient, to keep to her studies, while lightly pushing the parents."

In such moments, narratives concerning class-based values and discipline became muddled. On one hand, informants at times would label the so-called business class as an upwardly mobile section of the middle class, lacking in the morality evident in the "true" middle-class and in the "grooming" and supposed progressive mentalities of the upper-classes. In trying to emulate upper-class lifestyles they were seen as doing so through largely immoral means – overt consumerism, money-mindedness, nepotism, and manipulations of the system – while still holding on to more conservative mindsets. In this narrative type, informants pointed to the influx of business class families as detrimental to Public Schools' values and character. At other times, the business class would be completely subsumed within the middle-class while the upper-classes were made out to be the overly Westernized, frivolous, or undisciplined "show offs." In these narratives girls coming from the uppermost echelons of Indian society were often blamed

for negatively influencing students from more middle-class backgrounds, as the latter felt pressure to match their upper-class batchmates' abilities for seemingly limitless consumption and negative attitudes, qualities commonly recognized and mirrored as "cool" among campus peer-groups. It is here that many students from these more middle-class backgrounds expressed, through a now familiar language, feelings of being "split." This latter narrative concerning business families was captured by one Welham teacher who posited,

"Many of these parents from business families, they've come up the hard way, you know, they've made things. They're often self-made men and I suppose at times they've often manipulated the system to get where they are and so I think that rubs off sometimes, right? I wouldn't characterize everybody but it is true. Yes. But in terms of discipline by and large I don't think…Welhamites are fairly disciplined. In fact I would say that the more upper-class, Westernized kids are more rowdy than other business family kids because quite often they're very grateful for their education and sometimes their traditional values make them often respectful to teachers in ways others might not."

Another Welham administrator noted the difficulties this can cause for institutions interacting with various home values and desires:

"A lot of what a certain type of parent would not like their daughter to get is not at all frowned upon by another parent and these children are mixing in school. A lot of the so-called 'cool' kids start to set the attitudes of the class and those who are a little alien to it actually become like split people. They lead a kind of cool life in school and then they're different at home. I have actually called girls, sat them down and counselled them saying, 'Don't forget where you came from. There's no need to be cool. There's no need to break laws. You don't need to spend money for the wrong things. Your parents are fine. Even if they can't speak

English or they speak it with a particular dialect or accent, they're fine. Value them.' But I mean we've had to do it very, very consciously and that is the biggest challenge. Teaching and all, that just happens, but these other things in boarding schools, these processes of accepting, they're the bigger challenge."

As marked by such statements, it was not just an upper-class value-system but a balance of "middle-class morality" that historic, all-girls' Public Schools aim to hold onto, of simplicity, groundedness, and the importance of learning to adjust, engaged in dialogues of folding-in or pushing back against those aspects of "traditionalism" *and* "modernity" deemed detrimental. There is, therefore, a constant dance at play among all-girls' Public Schools and their patrons, between legacies of emancipation and inclusion and the pursuit for status as enacted through contemporary school structures and admissions processes.

Class Acceptance and Admissions

One of the major considerations of all private schools when making admissions decisions is financial upkeep and growth. Being autonomous, non-profit educational institutions established through Trusts and Societies, these all-girls' Public Schools are primarily funded through student fees and tuition (since unlike the Boys' schools, all-girls' school endowments and alumnae donations are essentially non-existent). Choosing to attend a boarding school comes with a price. This fact alone can encourage or deter families from varying class backgrounds from applying and/or attending.

Excluding separate ancillary fees which together can total up to around Rs 2.5 lakh (*i.e.* Rs 250,000 or approximately 3,722 USD), senior student school fees for the 2013-14 academic year were Rs 3.7 lakh at Welham Girls'; between Rs 2.7 lakh and Rs 5.4 lakh (for international

students) at Mayo Girls'; Rs 2.4 lakh at SKV; and Rs 1.87 lakh for boarders and Rs 30,000 for day-scholars at MGD. That means boarders at MGD pay approximately six times the fees of their day-scholars, while Welhamites pay about twice as much as MGD boarders.[46] While the sizable costs of admission are deemed necessary given the costs of providing high-quality education and infrastructure, they also confer a certain status to these schools in addition to excluding large portions of the population based on cost of attendance alone. Welham Girls' even accepts the registration of a child *at birth* with the incentive to parents being that there is a lower registration fee. If a parent registers their daughter more than five years ahead of joining they pay Rs 6,500; three to five years ahead, Rs 9,000; and less than three years, Rs 12,000. From that point forward, all the way up to the day before the first day of school, registration costs Rs 45,000. To put that in perspective, that is more than an entire year's day-scholar tuition at MGD.

That being said, students, teachers, and administrators from all four schools believed their schools honestly try to keep their fees as low as possible while offering a large amount of scholarships. Stakeholders justified their fees by comparing themselves to other, more expensive schools – MGD compared itself to Mayo and Welham Girls'; Mayo and Welham Girls' compared themselves to their brother schools, especially Doon; and Doon compared itself to newer, corporately-backed day schools sprouting up all over the country in places like Delhi. Here are just a few examples of such comparative discourse:

> **MC:** Do you think this history of MGD you talk about, where the Rajmata designed it for all girls regardless of social background, makes it different than some of the other all-girls' IPSC schools?

[46] As a point of interest, Welham's total cost with ancillary fees is only about $15,500/year where the most expensive day-cum-boarding school in the U.S. had an annual tuition of $55,350 for boarders and $45,780 for day-scholars for the 2014-15 academic year.

Titisksha [MGD student]: I think Mayo and Welham Girls' have the richest girls ever [laughs]. Because I have heard stories that those girls, at Mayo Girls, show off.

MC: So, since the majority of students here pay full fees with a few on scholarships, do you see it as completely open to all to apply or is there some form of inequality built-in to admissions?

Lavisha [Mayo Girls' student]: Yea, naturally there is. But if you see Mayo [Girls'] in comparison to some of the other schools it has the least amount of fees. The Doon School is somewhere up near 6 or 8 lakh. Ours is closer to 3 or 4. So these days, people can afford [Mayo Girls'].

MC: What role does the entrance exam play in merit or equality?

Kamala [Welham Girls' student]: The fees still matter substantially…. If you go to other schools, their fees are a lot. They're much more. I have a cousin studying at The Doon School, so in the holidays two notices came together, one for Doon and one for Welham [Girls'], and the plan for the increase of fees was stated as 1 lakh per *year* for Welham [Girls'] and 1 lakh per *term* for Doon. Yea! So there's that comparison. A year versus a term! It's increasing a lot but I think they've managed to keep it to a rather…fair…amount here.

MC: Do you see the fees here increasing annually by some incremental percentage?

Doon admin: Yea, well I mean the inflation rate here is 10% minimum year on year. You just mole it away if you don't. Where The Doon School is different though is we've said people want the school fees held down artificially especially by the Old Boys stakeholder community and that was a good deal for them and some of them were multi-millionaires who could afford 10 times the fees and not even feel it. So I said that we've got to stop subsidizing rich people. So what we've done is that we've bumped up the fees but increased our scholarships massively. So we've been able to get really healthy finances and drive the school forward and have more boys than ever coming in on scholarships, including boys who were under the old fees would never have been able to come to the school at all. Uhm, and we're setting the

> pace in terms of that. I mean we're nowhere near the fees of a new corporate-backed day-school in Delhi or anything. They charge more as a day-school than we do for a year, but, you know, we are out in front and I put us there. As well as having an endowment from our Old Boys for scholarships and what not, we also discount our fees by 8-10% and transfer that wealth to less privileged families.

Here, the Doon Headmaster states that he wants the school to set the new standard of higher fees among the Public Schools. He reasons, if those with big money are already coming, why subsidize the rich and undermine the school's growth? Instead, have the rich subsidize scholarships for those coming from poorer families. One big reason for Doon's high prices, similar to many of the private day-schools[47] coming up in the big cities, is due to the fact that they offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) Board, a notoriously expensive curriculum, in addition to the Indian Boards since such a large number of their boys go abroad for college. All-girls' Public Schools like Welham Girls' that only see four or five girls go abroad for their undergraduate degrees, however, take a different approach when rationalizing the structuring of their fees and choice of Board. This approach frequently legitimized lower costs around a collective *school vision* of inclusivity and "openness" while at times expressing resignation to the fact that change will have to come as they are forced to meet external demands of society and the times.

[47] Some parents further argue that boarding schools are ultimately less expensive than day schools in India's larger cities because almost everything is included within their fees. Not only are some day school tuition fees more expensive, but even if they are not, parents then have to pay external costs to send their daughter to music, dance, or sports lessons; there's coaching and tuitions, parties, going to the movies with friends, and wearing different clothes every day. As one parent stated, "It's cheaper for me to send her here than to keep her at home…. At home she'd go to school till say 2:00 and then she'd go to her tennis lessons and then she'd want Bharatnatayam lessons. So I have to pay for those lessons. I have to send her in the car with the driver. I can't send her my daughter with a male driver alone so I'd have to send the *aaya*. Every week she'd want to go out to the PVR or whatever to see movies. She'll want to treat her friends. She'll want to buy new clothes. I'll have to keep giving her lots and lots of money. Here she's wearing the same clothes every day. She gets a limited amount of pocket money and everything else, her lessons, her activities; it's all built into a package.

"We've had many discussions at the Board level and some discussions at the senior staff level about chancing Boards," explained Jyoti, a Welham administrator, "but the IB is expensive and it would involve an essential vision change."

"What do you mean by vision change?" I asked, perplexed.

"I mean that we'd have to say, fine, we're going to have to open up our fees and accept the fact that we'll have to just open up our school to only the people who can pay much more. That's one *big* vision change. That would definitely knock out some of the parents that send their daughters right now because currently our fees are half that of Doon, half, 3 versus 6 lakh now but likely to go up to 4 versus 8 lakh. And, the other IB schools are much more expensive. Whether it's Pathways or one of these bigger schools, Woodstock, which was going above 12 lakh when I last heard, and some of the other schools are much more expensive, the Ambani schools[48] or whatever. They are very expensive so you automatically hit a different section of society and that niche is a smaller niche that you are then catering to. And when you start catering to those families and their children then you're also relinquishing a lot of your middle-class approaches which still exist at Welham."

"And what's a 'middle-class' approach?" I tried to clarify.

"Saying 'no' to a lot of moral frivolities," she explained. "To quote Bernard Shaw, you give up a lot of middle-class morality. And then you say, fine, we've got to open up the school to allow the kids to just walk around the campus with their own laptops and phones and accessing whatever they want, reduce the supervision and just open it up. Personally I think that's going to have to happen anyways to some degree."

"Because…?"

[48] Ambani is a big business house in India which is responsible for the Reliance brands and stores

"Because that's the way the world's gone. It's a little fact. So far we are trying to do this peculiar tightrope walk, but I have a feeling that after a little while we're just going to have to ease off. The old hands will need to retire and let the young people say that it's alright to let the kids access what they want because they're going to do it anyway despite these things. So why bother with the policing and just get ahead in the counseling because we can't stop what's happening."

So Public Schools risk a perceived loss of "morality" either way, a morality in jeopardy whether from the top or the bottom, from the entrance of those from the rising middle-classes or from the schools' historic upper-class majority.

Yet, various state government and national policies over the years aiming to democratize elite private schools such as fee regulations have also had their effects. The 2013 Rajasthan Schools (Regulation of Collection of Fee) Bill, for example, constituted a state government committee[49] to "fix the fee for admission of the pupils to any Standard or course of study in Government schools or aided schools," by penalty of three years jail time and a fine of Rs 50,000.[50] Much of this action was due to parent associations in certain states complaining about seemingly arbitrary yearly hikes in private school fees, slowly excluding those of certain economic classes while stretching others thin. While some like the Rajasthan Act are already in place, others such as the Madhya Pradesh Private School Regulatory Act were yet to be approved as of 2015 given private schools' continued protests against the regulations' arguably biased nature and dismissal of school autonomy. Either way, schools like Mayo, SKV, and Welham are

[49] The first committee assembled in 2013 was made up of a retired High Court Judge, a member of the School and Sanskrit Education Department within the Government of Rajasthan, a Director of Secondary Education, the Director of Elementary Education, a Director of Sanskrit Education, a Chief Engineer (Buildings) from the Public Works Department, and a Deputy Secretary from the School Education Department

[50] According to this Bill, fees are based on the following factors: the location of the private school; the available infrastructure; the expenditure on administration and maintenance; the reasonable surplus required for the growth and development of the private school; and any other factor that may be prescribed. This fee is then reassessed every three years.

for the most part exempt from such legislations due to the added costs considered for being fully-residential. MGD, on the other hand, with its large day-scholar component was hit hard by such legislations, leading them to have the lowest day-scholar *and* boarding fees out of the four schools. Several private day and day-boarding schools in Rajasthan, including MGD and Mayoor (Mayo's quasi-affiliated day-school) supported in part by the Society for Unaided Private Schools in Rajasthan (SUPSR), publicly opposed the act, threatening to close in protest for a few days in February 2014. Prior to, in January 2014, only 562 out of 37,500 private schools had disclosed their required fee structure to the state government's committee.[51]

Overall, one way elite Public Schools defend against claims labeling them as class exclusionists is through scholarships, bursaries, and quotas. Not only does the IPSC offer a number of scholarships per year, but individual schools have various annual grants they give to students from less well-off backgrounds. At Welham Girls', for example, parents can apply for scholarships by submitting a separate application and their income tax returns. Following their acceptance to the school, the scholarship committee made up of the principal, vice principal, and various other senior staff members, then looks at the student's academic performance and parents' need to make their decision. For the 2014-15 academic year a total scholarship amount of around Rs 30 lakh was distributed among 28 girls. While only one student whose mother was identified as a maid and father an alcoholic received full support (around Rs 4 lakh), amounts ranging from as much as Rs 1.5 lakh and as little as Rs 75,000 were then divided up among the remained 27 girls. Though these specific scholarships weigh merit and need, there are also certain quotas or "reservations" in existence at each school based simply on a student's family background or identity. These quotas do not provide tuition breaks, but, perhaps more

[51] A more recent bill, the Rajasthan Education Institutions (Regulation of Fee) Bill 2016, which gives parents more say in deciding the fees of their wards, is also being challenged by a number of private school bodies since it was passed by state assembly, replacing the former 2013 bill.

importantly, provide an increased chance of admissions. At schools like Mayo, Welham, and SKV that have entrance exams, this translates into percentage increases. For example, if your mother or sister went to Welham there is a 7% markup on your exam; or if your parents are in a transferable/government job there is a 5% markup. This, at a school where the acceptance rates in 2014 were 10.87% in Class 6, 7.2% in Class 7, and only a little over 6% in Class 11 is quite significant given that top exam scores are commonly separated by just a few points. At places like MGD, where students at the primary and junior school levels are accepted largely via lottery, things become even less merit-based. In 2014's Class I admissions, there were a total of 144 available seats – 36 were reserved through the Right to Education Act (25%), 20 for daughters of staff members or ex-MGDians (13.9%), 26 seats for sisters (18%), four seats for those whose parents were in a transferable/government job (0.03%), and eight were reserved under a management quota (0.06%). This means that only 34.72% of Class 1 seats, or 50 out of 144, were truly "open" to the public. While some argue that children of Public School teachers are the most privileged as they frequently hail from more middle-class backgrounds, earn an educator's salary, and receive a virtually free Public School education for their sons or daughters, the "management quota," present at many private schools and colleges, is thought to be perhaps the most insidious. The management quota is often used by those on schools' Boards of Governors to vouch for the children of friends in high places, circumventing the lottery's attempts at equal opportunity. These "friends," holding positions such as Minister of Education, police commissioner, city controller, contractor, or ex-royalty, some administrators stated, are frequently considered in terms of future services they might provide. If a Public School is planning some large-scale changes to its infrastructure in the next few years, for instance, it may

be prudent to let in the daughters of someone able to move a lot of red tape or help with income tax exemptions – elite networking at its best.

"Recommendations coming in the form of letters, emails, personal calls, and gifts, from government officials to personal connections seeking favors or an advantage at the time of admissions, are not infrequent," offered one administrator. "It is ultimately up to the heads of school and people in my position to have a firm resolve against such advances, otherwise people can take advantage."

Lastly, I also had administrators explain how there are those moments where an unofficial weightage in favor of a student is given due to their parents' occupations. While service families are taken care of in many an official quota, Public Schools eager to expand their intake of girls coming from professional families sometimes take this into consideration.

Embedded within these quotas is something similarly present in Public Schools' stated desires for a more regionally diverse student body, that is, moral debates over access, belonging, and status. National education policy reforms aimed at improving *caste parity* within such elite schools have also played a sizable role in these narratives and constructions of acceptance over the last few decades. One such piece of legislation enacted by the Parliament of India in 2009 was the Right to Education Act. Among other things, the Act intends to increase access among students from lower castes and economically weaker sections of society to private schools. Acceptance of such students within many of India's Public Schools, known for their high caste heritage, however, has not been met by unanimous ovation but by varying degrees of protest, petitioning, and admissions finagling, often citing merit and misaligned character fit as reasons to push back against proposed changes and veiled challenges to claims of eliteness.

Caste Matters:
The "Merits" of the Right to Education Act and its 25% Quota

MC: So what kinds of students go to MGD? What are some of their backgrounds?

Neha [MGD student]: I mean, before when my, uhm, aunt used to study in MGD it was all the high-caste people. I mean only the richer ones used to come in. But now everybody is equal. So everyone comes in. Well, those who can afford. The fees count I guess.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, better known as the Right to Education (RTE) Act, was a culmination of many pieces of legislation, policies, and programs leading up to and after independence striving to ensure a "level" playing field within primary (and, to a lesser extent, secondary) education, interested not only in universal enrollment but also raising the quality of education offered and received by students regardless of their background, location, or type of school. The Act not only provides every child between the ages of 6 and 14 with the right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school till the completion of elementary school, but outlines norms and standards for school buildings and infrastructure,[52] student-teacher ratios (29:1), school-working days (200-220 days), teacher-working hours (45 hour per week minimum), teacher training qualifications; and curriculum development aligned with the values of all-round development guaranteed by the Constitution. The RTE Act also prohibits the deployment of teachers to non-educational work, private tuitions, the running of unrecognized schools, physical punishment, and mental harassment.

But perhaps where Public Schools were impacted the most was in admissions. Under the RTE Act, screening procedures for admissions (*e.g.* entrance exams or interviews) and capitation fees (*i.e.* any kind of donation or contribution of payment other than the fee notified by the

[52] *E.g.* all-weather buildings, 1-classroom-1-teacher, head teacher offices, separate toilets for girls and boys, safe drinking water, libraries, playgrounds, kitchen sheds, fencing, boundary walls, and barrier free access

school) were made illegal, punishable by hefty fines and even jail time. Students are to be admitted to all schools free of any charge by way of an impartial lottery system. Most controversial of all is a clause that further requires all "private" schools reserve 25% of their seats in 1st Standard for children belonging to "disadvantaged groups" or economically "weaker sections" (EWSs) of society. [53] Within the legislation, children belonging to a disadvantaged group are defined as those from Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs), or other groups with disadvantages due to social, cultural, economic, geographical, linguistic, gendered, or other factors. Weaker sections of society are defined as those whose annual income is lower than a minimum set by the state government (Parliamentary Act No. 35 of 2009). With that said, each state government can to a point differently define who qualifies for each of these groups or sections. In Rajasthan, for example, "disadvantaged" mostly relates to caste affiliation or those with disabilities while in Uttarakhand it currently includes orphans, the children of widows, those with HIV, and girls. In Rajasthan, "weaker sections" are defined as those households below the poverty line (*i.e.* making less than Rs 2.5 lakh per annum) while in Uttarakhand they are those making below Rs 55,000 per annum. Though these definitions and qualifications cover a larger spectrum of backgrounds, much popular debate considers the Right to Education a reservation according to caste.

As stated by Neha in this section's opening quote, all-girls' Public Schools have historically been home to the daughters of high caste families. Schools like MGD, SKV, and Mayo, established by the Indian royal aristocracy in particular have strong attachments to their

[53] "Types" of schools in India and how they should meet RTE's admissions guidelines: (1) government schools or schools established or controlled by the appropriate government or local authority shall provide free and compulsory education to all children; (2) aided schools receiving aid or grants to meet whole or part of their expenses from an appropriate government or local authority shall provide free compulsory education for a minimum 25% at entry level; (3) schools belonging to a specified category (*e.g.* Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodyayas, Sainik) must provide free and compulsory education for minimum 25% at entry level; (4) unaided private schools not receiving any shall admit in Class I to the extent of at least 25% the strength of that class children from weaker sections or disadvantaged groups in the neighborhood.

Rajput and Maratha heritage. Even today, students at Mayo and MGD use this heritage both proudly and as an explanation for why certain families send their daughters to these schools, why the continuation of certain rituals and ceremonies is important, and even why change is sometimes slower. Students at Mayo described their *salwar kameez* uniforms as representative of that identity as well as a product having of "so many old Rajput men" on their Board of Directors. Meanwhile MGDians frequently described their traditional welcome, a Rajput *aarti*, and the prevalent Hindu symbolism in their school's "secular" plays in terms similarly put by this one 11th Standard student who stated, "Most of the students who go here are Hindu. It's a Rajput school, I guess" (*see* Appendix B). And though the founders of Welham aimed to get away from such traditional feudalism and caste-preoccupation, many of their early patrons were members of the Bengali *bhadralok* or other progressive societies such as the Brahmo Samaj, made up mainly by those from the educated upper-castes (*e.g.* Brahmins, Kayasthas, and Baidyas), while Miss Linnell brought many from Hyderabad's royal aristocracy up to Dehradun as teachers and students. Recall how early Welhamites comparably described their school as being "choc-a-bloc with *rajkumaris*," having "a lot of ex-royalty; girls from Tripura, Patiala, Nepal" (Akbar 2007:114).

So though the norms for admissions at MGD, SKV, and Welham in the beginning did not include entrance exams, the vast majority of students came from the upper echelons of Indian caste society. Still, early Welham alumnae would tell me that they were never really aware of each other's caste – "since girls were known either by their first names or numbers [IDs], families, caste and religion were irrelevant" (*ibid.*:113). And this part concerning first names is important, as one can often tell the caste (as traditional occupation or region) of a person from their last name. One early student, the daughter of a general in the Indian army, even stated that

she was caught off guard when a girl in college asked if she was a Brahmin as she didn't know. Now, one could argue that not knowing your caste is a luxury lower castes seldom experience or that early students didn't know each other's castes since it was easy to assume everyone was from the same upper slices of society, but most informants contended that it was just the nature of the schools' missions of acceptance that made caste a non-issue. Reservations and quotas in many ways changed all this, making caste affiliation a student's ticket in or proof of *truly* belonging to these Public Schools.

A Brief History of Reservations in India

It's said that precedence for the Right to Education Act is found in Article 45 of the Constitution of India (1950). However, British viceroys and especially the princely states were known for putting aside quotas in the areas of government employment and education for certain caste or communal minority groups well before. When the Hunter Commission was appointed in 1882, activist and social reformer Jyotirao Phule made a demand for free and compulsory education for all, along with proportionate reservations in government jobs. In 1901-02, Chatrapati Sahuji Maharaj, Maharaja of Kolpur in Maharashtra, introduced 50% reservations in favor of backward classes (BCs) in order to eradicate poverty and allow them representation in the princely state's administration (Laskar 2010:30). Provisions for reservations were then made in the Government of India Act 1909 and in 1921 when the Madras Presidency introduced the first communal government order in which reservations were provided,[54] preempting British

[54] G.O. #613 provided 44% reservations for non-Brahmins, 16% for Brahmins, 16% for Muslims, 16% for Anglo-Indians/ Christians, and 8% for Scheduled Castes.

Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald's Communal Act of 1932,[55] the first to split the Indian electorate primarily on the basis of religion. This Act subsequently created anxieties among many Hindu Punjabis and the Bengali *bhadralok*, including one famous lawyer, Mahatma Gandhi, for fear of losing the majority vote within a Muslim-majority state (Chakrabarty 1989). This debate over caste/communal electorates, also considerate of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's proposition for a separate Scheduled Caste Dalit[56] vote culminated in 1935 with a resolution known as the Poona Pact, creating a complete Hindu electorate containing Dalit reservations. In 1942, Ambedkar established the All India Depressed Classes federation to support the progress of Scheduled Castes (SCs) in government services and was later appointed chairman of the Indian Constitution's drafting committee in 1947 (Laskar 2010:30-1). Much of these deliberations over community and caste were particularly related to the place of women in Indian society as either representative of their religious or caste communities' "social" identities or constructed as their own political collective, in search of "rights" or accommodations for franchise and representation.

When the Indian Constitution was completed in 1950, equal opportunity and fundamental rights were declared key components of the newly independent nation, disallowing the discrimination of "any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them" (Article 15(1)). Even though Article 15(4)[57] which sets the constitutional basis for reservations in education did not form part of the original Constitution, Article 16(4) did provide "provision for the reservation of the appointment of posts in favor of any backward class of

[55] The 1932 Communal Act was in many ways a culmination of the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 (also known as the Indian Councils Act, 1909). These reforms increased the number of Indians allowed into various legislative councils and announced the right to separate electorates to Muslims (Chakrabarty 1989).
[56]As lower-caste untouchables or the "depressed classes" were known then
[57] Protects "any special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes"

citizens" (*ibid.*:31). There was some worry among the original drafting committee, especially on the part of Ambedkar, that such clauses ascribing "preferential" treatment to backward classes would result in further segregation of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), a "separate but equal" type of treatment which would ultimately not be in their favor (*ibid.*:32). This provision was eventually introduced through the Constitution (First Amendment) Act in 1951[58] as an Article *not* granting marginalized classes the right to reservation but simply allowing the state *the discretion* to provide a reservation. What's more, the Constitution never defines who qualifies as a "socially and educationally backward class," but allows for the appointment of a commission to investigate the condition of these classes (Article 340).[59]

The practice, execution, and enforcement of such laws, whether in British India or after the writing of the Constitution, have not always been straightforward or successful. Article 45 of the Constitution of India (1950) reads, "The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." In 1964, the Kothari Commission was convened involving representatives and educationalists from India, England, the United States, France, Japan, and Russia to discuss the problems facing the Indian education system. Claiming that education was intended to increase productivity; develop social and national unity; consolidate democracy; modernize the country; and develop social, moral, and spiritual values, the Kothari Commission anticipated the first National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968 under

[58] In response to the Government of Madras's attempt to reserve seats in state medical and engineering colleges on the basis of religion, race, and caste, at the time challenged as unconstitutional (Laskar 2010:33).

[59] The first Backward Classes commission known as the Kalelkar Commission (named after its chairman, Kaka Saheb Kalelkar) was appointed in January 1953, tasked with determining the tests by which any particular class or group could be called "backward;" preparing a list of such backward communities for the whole of India; and examining the difficulties facing these communities and recommended steps to their amelioration. Its report, presented to Parliament in 1955 formulated four criteria to define "backward class": low position in the traditional caste hierarchy; lack of general educational advancement; inadequate representation in government service; and inadequate representation in trade, commerce, and industry. On this basis, the commission classified 2,399 castes as "backward," with 837 or those identified as the "most backward" (Laskar 2010:34-5).

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi which called for compulsory education for all children up to age 14. In 1978, nearly 23 years after the first backward classes commission, another was convened to determine the criteria for defining these "backward classes," recommended steps, and the desirability of seat reservations (Laskar 2010:35-6). This was known as the Mandal Commission. The 1980 Mandal Report recommended the installation of 27% reservations for all SCs, STs, and SEBCs (now known as the "other backward classes" or OBCs) within positions of government service and higher education. The system led to an outcry among caste communities, eventually leading to the self-immolation of several students in protest in front of Delhi University in 1990.

In 2002, Article 21A (the 86th Amendment) made free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school for all children between the ages of six and 14 a *fundamental right*, an obligation of the appropriate government to provide free primary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance, and completion. It also substituted Article 45 with a demand for the state to provide early childhood care and education for all children until age six. The Right to Education Act was seen as necessary in order to move past recommendations for educational parity and universal enrollment given to particular states, which could then be ignored, to create a system of accountability, implementation, and evaluation. Even though there was a prior emphasis on equal access to primary education through programs such as 1993-94's District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) which became the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) or "Education for All Movement" in 2000-01, funded by state and central governments that received aid from external agencies such as the World Bank, DRID, and UNICEF, the RTE Act placed a *moral compulsion* on parents, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders to create not just equal opportunity but the conditions so that students and families from the economically weaker sections could avail of such opportunities.

Public School Protests: Merit and "Mixing Up"

In 2009, Public School administrators and Board Members, especially at the all-boys' schools, strongly protested specific clauses of the RTE Act. They argued that such affirmative action policies were based on "foreign" rights-based discourses that might have worked in places like the United States but that execution, implementation, and accountability across India would not be feasible. Its vast size and significant differences across states and regions, not to mention frequent incidences of corruption, were felt responsible for leaving only elite schools accountable to such demands, burdening private schools while circumventing the problems facing government schools. Claims were made that the law threatened school administrative autonomy; did a disservice to merit-based admissions; reified caste identities; and created social adjustment issues among the admitted lower-caste students. They also argued that not many Public Schools even had a 1st Standard but started in Classes 4, 5, or 6 and that the high fees of a boarding school would put the government in no position to reimburse them appropriately. Through such arguments, Public Schools, informally headed by Mayo College, joined protests against the 25% seat quota through a writ petition to the Supreme Court of India called, *Infringement on Private Schools, The Society for Un-aided Private Schools, Rajasthan*. The petition claimed that the Act violated the constitutional rights of private managements to run their institutions without government interference. It also criticized the government for forcing unaided schools to hold a 25% quota, transferring their constitutional obligation to provide free and compulsory education to non-state actors like private schools. On April 12, 2012, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court delivered its judgement stating that although holding such reservation were not unconstitutional, this clause of the Act would not be applicable to unaided

private minority schools and boarding schools. Thus, fully-boarding Public Schools like Mayo, Welham, and SKV are currently exempt from the 25% quota. Still, all other clauses, including those delineating requirements on infrastructure, student-teacher ratios, working hours/days, and restrictions on entrance exams apply. The relationship between Public Schools and the RTE Act over such issues in terms of autonomy, admissions, status, and equality is ongoing and has been differently received, endorsed, and enforced by each school.

Upon first arrival at Mayo College Boys' School, for example, I was on a tour of campus when I was introduced to a Board member who immediately asked me,

"And what do you think of all this RTE business?"

Caught off-guard, I quickly offered that I thought Mayo was exempt from RTE, thinking the controversial 25% seat quota to be his main concern, warranting the tone.

"No, no; not that," he interjected, waving my sentence away impatiently, "The other requirements we still have to meet. The inspections, the paperwork…it's endless!"

At the all-girls' schools, RTE was something frequently brought up as well in conjunction with larger issues of reservations, discussed in a manner mostly supportive of the legislation's goals of ensuring a level playing field for all, but qualified with skepticism and critique in regards to the Act's on-the-ground implementation. Mainly, my informants raised concerns regarding merit and fit as well as the feasibility of such plans given the schools' structures. For many, admissions to an all-girls' Public School should not be based on luck or chance via lottery but some kind of examination of skills. This was not only a way to quality control the process, offered administrators, but ensure a fair one. Many stated that this was why the former Government of India Merit Scholarship Scheme in the mid-1950s was better as students still had to *earn* their way in and were therefore more likely to keep up with Public

School curricula and mix-in better with non-scholarship students. To gain admission under this former scheme, children between the ages of five and 12 sat for a competitive examination, with those above age nine sitting for two exams in Hindi or English, Math, and General Knowledge before a final interview and aptitude test.[60] This scheme wasn't just about caste but considered a family's socio-economic standing in reference to merit; and, importantly, the government completely sponsored these student at full-cost. As put by a Welham Girls' administrator,

"We had to be exempt [from the 25% quota] because for us we have no other income than fees and we're not bound by the laws of land because we didn't receive this land through concessions from the government. I *do* believe in what we used to have in India, the system of the Government of India Merit Scholars, yes. We had them and, boy, were they bright."

In addition to this point, one MGD teacher noted how thanks to their comparable merit it was difficult to tell who was on scholarship and who wasn't, "We used to have this…we would call them 'merit students,' belonging to a very low socio-economic status and sometimes government employees' children who were employed in a very low status or whatever. They were given free education, *totally* free. And even we as teachers would not know who they were until or unless we were told. So there was quite a lot of change in them. And we couldn't even believe when they passed out that this particular child was from that background."

An MGD alumna similarly recalled, "We must have had about five or six when we graduated. We used to call them 'scholarship girls,' but they were very bright. There was no discrimination; we just had this name for them. Most of them didn't know English when they joined but by the time they finished they'd learned enough English and they always did well."

[60] Today, a similar National Means Cum -Merit Scholarship Scheme is offered by the national government to economically weaker sections in Class 9-12 to stymie drop-out rates post Class 8.

To this point, however, some "scholarship girls" after admittedly working hard to pass the scholarship examinations found it hard to cope up in their new Public School environments. One such student, who gained admissions as a 10-year old to MGD in 1957 along with the first set of merit scholars, recalled her difficult transition particularly in terms of language:

> I was placed in J-3. My English was very poor and I did not follow the classes. All the teachers took pains in repeating lessons for my benefit but I just did not understand. I was too afraid to tell the teachers so whenever they asked me whether I had followed them (I had been asked the question so often that by now I understood it) I told them that I did, although it was quite obvious that I had not understood a word of the whole lesson. Special tuitions were arranged for me, but I was afraid of being tutored, as I had the impression that only dull girls got tuitions. I hid myself at the time of tuitions. I still remember the other girls who were also being given tuitions with me, wasting their time looking for me. My Hindi and Arithmetic were of quite a high standard. Some of the Jijas [classmates] from J-1 came to me for help in Arithmetic. They translated the sums for me into Hindi and I worked them out. In the Half-yearlies that year I got 6% in History, 15% in Geography, 20-25% in English as compared to 95% in Hindi and 100% in Arithmetic. (*Silver Jubilee Souvenir*)

A decade later, in 1968, 26 merit scholars had graduated from MGD and 35 were still enrolled.

While on these schools' campuses in 2013-14, this question of being able to "mix up" frequently occurred in consideration of any scholarship students, RTE or otherwise. SKV, for example, though exempt from the 25% quota, stated that they still engage with other state and school-sponsored scholarships out of the schools' own missions of equality. An administrator noted that most of these girls do well, if not eventually, yet many expressed difficulty in adjusting.

"We have quotas for SC and ST students. One is for a Class 5 student and one is for a Class 6 student. We do get nearly one or two admissions every year. And the government has to

pay for this. It is free education for these children. Complete fees. They stay in the hostel. Although…these children, they find it difficult to stay actually."

"Why is that?" I asked.

"Uh…they're coming from the lower class, they have not seen so much so they find it difficult to manage. Immediately the comparisons start. Some children they really do well though. You can't figure it out. A child will study from Class 5 and pass out in Class 12 and you can't even figure it out. They're so smart in these years."

Still, she added, to gain admissions SKV requires these students to also pass the school's entrance exam, albeit at a much reduced percentage. While "general" students might have to score in the 75-80% range, "scholarship" students only have to pass in the 40-50% range – "80% is not applicable for these ST/SC students because they are the government scholars so we have to give them this facility. Then they have to work very hard once they get in."

Though these schools are not allowed to hold "entrance exams" per the RTE Act's requirements, Mayo, Welham, and SKV, like others, currently get around this through a matter of semantics. They now hold "Personality Assessments" that basically work the same way as their former entrance exams but get around the policy's language of exemption.

Conversely at MGD, a majority day scholar school, RTE has been in full implementation since 2010, meaning all primary and junior school admissions, particularly in 1st Standard, are established by way of lottery. In 2013, with a Standard I class size of 240 students, 60 of those seats were reserved for girls coming from state-identified marginalized backgrounds. Though alumnae stated that it was difficult to tell who was a "scholarship girl" or "merit student" in the school's opening years, today, these girls are often called the "RTE students" in unofficial conversation among teachers and administrators. These students are not only labelled as-such on

class rosters but primary school teachers regularly told me that even if they weren't it would be easy to identify them in the classroom. Narratives of students' (in)abilities to "mix up" in this sense were commonplace. While claims, financial and otherwise, made it so fully-residential Public Schools became exempt, those at MGD adamantly argued that the residential format made *more* sense if you were worried about students actually mixing in and coming up to par. At residential schools, they posited, these students could become fully embedded in school culture, separated from the daily reminders of difference day-scholars must experience when they go home.

"MGD has had about three years with RTE," stated a primary school teacher. "So they're now in Class 1, 2 and 3. I have about five or so girls in each of my classes. One or two may be able to keep up, but overall, they are so lost all the time. Most can barely speak English. One just sits there staring at her workbook. So we have a remedial class with a special educator they can go to and maybe after six months they improve and can be folded back in. Now it is more challenging. It's very easy to teach a very bright student, isn't it? But when we get those below average and all it's very challenging."

This was also the narrative among many senior students. While strongly against similar caste-based reservations in higher education, most students were strongly *in favor* of programs like RTE that helped disadvantaged groups at the primary levels. One possible problem, however, was in the difficulties students (and their parents) might face in adjusting between home and school life. Some students stated there might be some kind of resentment on the student's part as she grew up or even some felt-discriminations. Nisha, an 11th Standard MGDian, offered one example experienced by her taxi driver:

"RTE is a completely different kind of thing, the adjusting and all. My *autowala ji*, he, you know, got his daughter admitted to the school, but after that he took out her name. He sent his daughter to a different school because it's not possible, you know? He belongs to that class and…like, you have this Right to Education Act, but you cannot manage with the society."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean, he belongs to a low class and you have this Right to Education Act and you're sending your daughter to the school and the atmosphere…you see, girls are from a different class and they have all of these things – a good bag, a good brunch snack – and the *autowala*, my taxi driver, he cannot buy it for his daughter. So that creates a different thing in the psychology of the student. She'll think that I will never match these people. So after that, at a point, he had to get her out and send her to a normal government school."

Another senior MGDian, Soumya, stated that her younger sister was in Class 2 with a girl that didn't know any English. "They still talk to her, they're so young, they don't know the difference. And she'll learn, right? But as they get older, if they're able to mix-up, then they'll have more desires. They'll start thinking, oh my friend has this? Why can't I have that? So it'll be like that. But if they're not within the group then they'll always think, oh, I'm the lower one. I've always been the lower one. They'll be depressed all the time. She'll think, from the start I've always been the depressed and repressed one. So, it's more negative, this policy. Because I think mostly they don't get *in*. They're always outside. They start realizing, oh, I'm from a poor family. And even the ones who get to interact, they'll start seeing places like their richer friends' houses and they'll start questioning and thinking, why don't I have all of this stuff? And it will mess up and screw up their family life."

Here, Soumya offers that though these students may get in to these institutions they may always feel outside true belonging or access to certain forms of cultural or social capital. Time shall tell the actual outcomes and experiences of these students. There are, however, other, more immediate concerns voiced, that these students and their families, those actually deserving of such provisions, are not the ones capitalizing on the RTE Act's reservations. Corruption and concerns over school finances, identity, and status have influenced admissions practices at MGD over the past few years, many of which try to find a way around the policy's requirements.

Quota Implementation at MGD

As caste divisions can differ from state to state, not only in existence but in perceived hierarchical standing, determining which castes are granted OBC status becomes complex. Given the provisions available to those identified as such, state governments have seen certain caste groups vying for "low caste" status and being that caste affiliations are commonly tied to voter blocks, they often feel pressure to accept these applications in return for support. In this sense, my informants argued, many students coming from identified "marginalized" castes are actually doing very well socio-economically. This also contributes to questions over multi-generational reservations – once someone receives entrance into an elite school or government job by way of a caste-based seat quota, are their children then still considered in-need or deserving of such provisions? An administrator at MGD discussed how she had heard of people paying off government officials for Income Certificates that identified them as low-caste in order to qualify for RTE. "SCs and STs do not even need to provide proof of income, that identity alone gets them reservations." This, she explained, was how Meira Kumar, an ex-MGDian who went on to become the first woman speaker of India's Lok Sabha, received a free education and reservations

her whole life. Her family had SC status even though her father was Minister of Finance. She continued,

"I had this woman who came to my office one time, introduced by a waft of some expensive-smelling perfume and wearing a silk *sari* whose daughter was going to school for free here because her husband was an SC…so you have this person driving away in an Audi and getting a free education for her daughter."

Though the MGD principal stated she was in favors of the lottery as it deterred one aspect of corruption, where primary teachers at MGD used to offer prospective students coaching sessions out of their houses on how to pass the entrance exam and then were the same people grading those exams, the lottery itself can be undermined as well. Issues of caste-affiliation aside, MGD used to hold the RTE lottery itself on campus where applicant names were written on chits and then pulled from a hat until all seats were filled. In 2014, the Rajasthan government stated that it would conduct all school lotteries at its own office. While these officials stated this was to lower chances of in-school bribery, principals argued that this was not only another move to take away autonomy but also allowed for further corruption or bribery at the city or government level.

However, it was the number of RTE students coming in every year that compounded fees problems, seen as diluting school quality and leading to a number of school-driven changes. While the government of Rajasthan is supposed to refund schools Rs 9,000 for each RTE student, this amount does not come close to the fees of elite schools like MGD where tuition is closer to Rs 30,000 with miscellaneous fees of Rs 11,000. As such, MGD was losing a significant amount of money per year per student. Furthermore, as of 2013 the government had not paid *any* schools for the past three years of RTE implementation, forcing a number of private

schools to close their doors. At first, MGD tried to stifle these problems by reducing the overall Standard I class size. While in the first year of RTE implementation there were 240 Class 1 students (60 RTE), in 2013 that class size was cut in half – 144 total students (36 RTE).

"With this large number of RTE students in the classroom, they were always getting lost. We weren't able to provide the catch-up instruction they needed in terms of English skills and others to get them on par with the non-RTE kids," stated the principal.

There were plans to further reduce the number in subsequent years or perhaps add a nursery level to the school as others had done. Pre-schools notable have a *much* smaller class size, around 20 students (meaning six RTE) and at the time RTE only required the 25% quota in the *lowest* Class offered. However, after noticing this trend among schools, the government threatened that it would require schools to admit 25% in nursery *and* Class 1. Since the school couldn't increase their fees for "general" students due to Rajasthan's Regulation of Fees Bill, MGD's principal then tried to create a special "quota" category within the Class 1 lottery for families willing to sponsor RTE students (*i.e.* pay an extra Rs 30,000 for their tuition). This seat quota, meant to match the number of RTE students, was openly listed in the school's catalogue and a separate lottery was held for those in that category. However, a journalist got wind of the quota and reported it to the Secretary of Education who then held an investigation into the school, accused it of having "capitation fees." The principal noted that the journalist was simply acting on grudges since they had previously attempted to earn admissions for a daughter in the school's management quota but was denied. In the end, though there were no charges, the principal just had to return any extra money gained through the quota to those sponsor families while the media continued to call for harsher punishments including a penalty fee and an

admissions re-do. MGD is now focusing on starting various fund raising programs, particularly through their alumnae networks in order to rectify their financial losses.

"…but this still does not solve the impact of a changing student body. Over the years this will just continue to compound. It's really a failing of meritocracy," sighed the principal.

Concluding Thoughts

Within their self-driven attempts at diversity, a (re)claimed marker of eliteness that acknowledges historic missions of inclusivity and equality, all-girls' Public Schools have variously responded to the influx of perceived difference within their student body profiles in ways that support and undermine these missions. It is here that I have argued matters of regionality, social class, and caste represent trials to remaining truly "open" alongside admissions procedures that aim to select "students of ability" through evaluations of proposed "merit" and "fit," identifiers often rooted in constructions of ascendant upper-class/caste culture and morality. Inherent contradictions thus arise as these schools claim to signify and serve as purveyors of girls' empowerment while maintaining elite status through rather exclusionary practices, incongruities that must be mediated by institution and student alike in order to reduce feelings of "split" existence. Both work to fold-in and coach out, to accept and be accepted.

CHAPTER 3

Disciplined Empowerment:
Individuated Female Leaders and Controlled Collectives

On a Saturday night in early February, around 6 PM, just as it was becoming dark in the foothills of the Himalayas, I watched as Welham Girls' said goodbye to their outgoing senior class ("SCs"). The Candle Lighting Ceremony took place in the school's impressive quasi-outdoor brick amphitheater that triples as the main auditorium, performing arts space, and basketball stadium. On the triangular stage, outgoing and incoming school captains stood beside their House colors and pendants, a podium to the far right and, as is customary at all four schools, a large framed picture of the school's founder, Miss Linnell, draped with marigolds beside a lamp of knowledge set off to the left, illuminated by a spotlight. Directly below the stage, seated in the dark among two sections of folding chairs were the outgoing SCs and ascending Pre-SCs (11th Standard students), an aisle dividing the two. The school choir stood in the shadows off to the back, their voices and the sound of instrumental accompaniments setting the evening's tone. The rest of the student body and teachers were arranged by Class and House in the amphitheater's rising seats with visiting parents, senior teachers, and chief guests seated closer to the floor on the only upholstered seats present, arranged alongside tables set with glasses of water and flowers.

Following opening speeches, the evening progressed to the Captains' Investiture Ceremony. This, the culmination of months of nominations and recommendations, short-listing, candidates' speeches, and voting marked the passage of responsibility, recognition, and power from the out-going captains to a new set of student leaders. With the announcement of each station, a new captain was sworn into office, repeating school pledges of honesty and integrity.

Then, true to the ceremony's name, each captain received a corporeal symbol of their position, with the out-going captain removing and placing her blazer on the shoulders of her successor. I smiled inwardly as the Games Captain transferred her blazer, black in comparison to the rest of the school's navy blue as she had earlier joked about having to wear an oversized jacket for most of the ceremony since the new captain was a much taller girl.

Though a great deal of attention at the ceremony's open was on the stage, the real focus of the evening was on the totality of SCs and Pre-SCs located in the room's sunken center, a sense of primacy in the spatialized middle. In a gesture signifying the legitimizing power of school tradition and historicity, the Candle Lighting Ceremony began with the principal lighting the lamp of knowledge in front of Miss Linnell's portrait. This was then used to light the out-going captain's candle, which then lit that of the new captain and so forth for each new School Council member. Coming down from the stage, the captains proceeded to light the first SC's candle in each row which was then passed down the line to all their batchmates. One by one, the SCs walked to the center aisle where they were met by a Pre-SC to whom they passed their flame, processed down the aisle in pairs, and then split up the amphitheater's stairs to the upper balcony. It was through this process that out-going SCs relinquished their spatial prominence and moved to the periphery, to a space outside, marking their passage from the school.

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In many ways, senior classes represent their schools, their traditions and annual achievements. They have expectations placed upon them for higher levels of leadership and responsibility while often experiencing intensified feelings of belonging, power, and ownership over the schools' spaces and their time. Such rituals, performed at all four schools, however,

serve as formalizations of more everyday instances of spatial, temporal, and bodily discipline as well as empowerment mediated by all students. The previous chapter, in arguing that today's admissions processes utilize narratives of morality, merit, and fit to fold-in and coach-out the complications in defining and accepting the ideal Public School student among diversifying demographics sets up projects of collective subject formation once these students are admitted. In this chapter, I posit that these projects center on the cultivation and mediation of a *disciplined empowerment*, where the "ideal" female student is one who successfully negotiates the somewhat paradoxical relationships between self-regulation and agentive liberation, concepts connected to constructions of certain classed and gendered chacacteristics in addition to discursive neoliberal strategies of development and governmentality.

The first Indian Public Schools aimed to represent "the positioning of the desideratum of liberalism – 'efficiency,' 'discipline,' and 'merit' – into a discretionary taxonomy of social class and personality" (Srivastava 1998:203). To this end, the boarding school model worked to physically and character-wise separate itself from those "out there." Theirs was imagined as a kind of rational discipline as it was self-appointed, not involving policing or corporeal punishment which were frequently related to the uneducated, rural, and lower-classes, as well as to the home and female. Although this discursive feminization of indiscipline altered over the years following independence, debates concerning the proper demeanor of "respectable" girls, that is, their bodily comportment, dress, speech, treatment of elders and male others, dedication to the home and its attending duties, and so forth, as well as their existence in public spaces, particularly at certain hours, continue to limit freedoms through a language of (in)discipline. Within all-girls' Public Schools today this language is analogous to larger gendered and classed

considerations of belonging, ownership, and power, within certain spaces, over the use of time, and in corporeal expression and practice.

During my fieldwork, discipline was a constant topic of conversation at these schools, regularly laced with pride and worry over its perceived lack. I was not on Mayo Girls' campus more than five minutes, for example, when I was asked by Mrs. Paul, a senior teacher,

"So, what do you think of the discipline of this school? I used to think they were a bunch of hooligans because I came from a convent school. When school would end, we would leave the class in lines. But I guess freedom and ideas of independence are more of a Public School thing; 'Independence' with a capital 'I.'"

Convent schools on the subcontinent have long claimed ownership over the pedagogical prowess "to discipline." To Mrs. Paul's point, all-girls' Public Schools, in comparison, tend to differentiate themselves as venues caught up in mediating missions that strive to liberate the self – creating actualized, independent, female leaders, self-reliant and self-disciplined – while existing as a form of social intervention – uplifting a specific group through homogenized systems of identification and disciplinary practices. This led me to ask: (1) How do these schools work to define and inculcate collective forms of identity and discipline; (2) How do these missions interact with others aimed at creating empowered individuals; and (3) How do students engage with them both? At times, I found these aims supported existing structures of gender inequality, as hierarchy, control, and separation, while at others they prepared and encouraged girls to push against such constructions and endeavor for change. Many students explained their experiences and actions as deliberations over rights and duties, lessons often taught at school. In this way, some saw themselves as completely policed and controlled by the school, others saw it as their independent right to abandon discipline, while still others described true empowerment

as an exercised balance of both, where your individual duty is to ensure that by enforcing your own rights you don't inhibit those of others. As such, this chapter examines the ways female Public School students are enforcing, questioning, opting out of, and/or resisting certain institutional (and societal) frameworks of discipline, leading them to differentially describe their schools as both *paheli* [cage] and perhaps the only or last space and time to feel empowered.

Spatial Discipline

On my first day at MGD I was set up on a tour of campus with 10th and 11th Standard students, Bhavika and Ananya. Meeting up behind the stadium following assembly, we began our meandering walk around the school. It was a blistering hot morning in mid-July and I noticed that the groundskeepers were busily mowing the playing fields and setting up sprinklers to give the grass a much-needed drink. Following my gaze, Bhavika said,

"Yea, they do that almost every day in these months. Gotta keep it looking good, right? We have a rose garden too we can show you."

Walking in that direction, Ananya pointed out a few of the hostels, three of which she had lived in over her years at the school. "Now here's where the mayhem happens. You wanna see *real* MGDians in action, here it is," she laughed, leering at Bhavika, a day scholar. "I'm contesting for Orange House Captain this year, so we'll see."

"Whatever, man," Bhavika countered, drawing my attention to the infirmary and Old Girls' Guild office. There were a few senior students sitting on benches along the way. "Bunking [skipping class]," Bhavika explained as if pointing out another staple of campus. "And down there," she said gesturing to a small path that led back behind the hostels out to the boundary wall, "is the Quiet Corner. We're not allowed back there…and plus, it's creepy."

The Quiet Corner was the location of Miss Lutter's grave and, they described, the subject of a number of campus ghost stories. We turned the corner in the opposite direction, walking past the taekwondo field and arriving in front of the main building.

"Well, here's your money shot," offered Bhavika. We paused for a moment to look at the bust of Maharani Gayatri Devi out front, which they explained took the place of a fountain a few years ago after a great deal of protestation. Walking through the portico, passing paintings of the Rajmata, Maharaja Sawaii Man Singh II, and Miss Lutter, we came upon a hallway that wrapped around the building's inner courtyard. "We'll go this way…toward my classroom," Bhavika said, directing us to the right.

"What's that way?" I asked, gesturing back to the left where I saw a number of *bai jis* washing the marble floors.

"Oh, You know…principal ma'am's office and what not" said Ananya. "We're not really allowed back there. Maybe when I'm *Orange Captain*," she let on smiling. "I guess they think if these areas are organized like this, whatever…we will be organized…"

"…and 'disciplined,'" finished Bhavika with air-quotes and a lolling tongue, "but then…they didn't think of the MGD attitude," she laughingly added with a double pop of her uniform's *kameez* [shirt].

Philosopher and sociologist, Henri Lefebvre (1974), has argued that space is a social product, a complex social construction based on values and the social production of meanings that affect spatial practices and perceptions. In connection, Foucault (1995:141) has posited that:

> Discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space. To achieve this end, it employs several techniques….Discipline sometimes requires enclosure, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony.

From formal to domestic architecture and within the design of urban landscapes, spatial hierarchies are employed to establish order, representing hierarchies defining rank, usage, and societal rules of separation. Palace architecture among the Mughals and feudal classes of India divided spaces and organized progression through the public, semi-public, semi-private, and private according to levels of access,[61] caste, occupation, and the rules of *purdah* that separated women from men (*i.e.* in the *zenana* and *mardana* wings). Similarly, upper-class homes in Victorian England contained public spaces for receiving and entertaining guests, physically separate servants' quarters, and even spaces delineated as decidedly "male" or "female" (*e.g.* drawing and billiards rooms). In these ways, spaces were classed and gendered, indicating hierarchies of belonging and, subsequently, not-belonging as well as establishing individual and collective identities. At their founding, feudal schools like MGD and SKV met these requirements of *purdah* and upper-class decorum by separating the genders (hence their early single-sex models, high barrier walls, and largely female staff), creating separate public and private spaces, and implementing practices distancing those who truly belonged at the schools from those who did not, purposefully partitioning their spaces into more disciplined (*i.e.* orderly) and less disciplined (*i.e.* chaotic) areas.

Today, the arrangement of bodies in space as seen in my tour of MGD's campus and in rituals like Welham Girls' Candle Lighting Ceremony are constructed out of similar institutional values that connect spatial and social hierarchies, mirrored in campus layouts. And though these schools are indeed private institutions and still retain residues of their past gendered and classed practices of separation and exclusion, their reputations make them highly visible and selectively open to the public. Concerned with instilling upper-class notions of collective discipline through

[61] *E.g.* the king's public audience hall or *diwan-i am* [public/ common room] and private audience hall, *diwan-i khass* [special/ main room])

self-regulation and creating independent and empowered girls, they provide spaces both freeing and highly surveilled, differentiated from yet integrated with Indian society, where female students work to support systems of discipline while also (re)claiming spaces of their own.

Campus Spaces: the Spatial Diffusion of Discipline, Ownership, and Power

The Semi-Public Disciplined Center: Primary and Secondary Spaces

When leaving the chaotic noise, crowds of peopled and motorized traffic, the beating sun, and dusty roads that characterize much of downtown old city sections in Jaipur, Gwalior, Ajmer, and, to a lesser extent, Dehradun, through the schools' main gates, visitors are met almost immediately by trees. Manicured lawns and whirling sprinklers are enjoyed by dancing peacocks and feeding peahens. The air seems perceptively cleaner and comparably quiet, save for the sound of an occasional bell or the chatter and shouts of students announcing the change of classes, lunch, or the start of games period. Entering these campuses your attention is at once directed toward the schools' main buildings. Often the first constructed and therefore most historic, these buildings grace the covers of annual school reviews, prospectuses, and website banners. They are the institutions' public faces, housing administrative and teachers' offices, visitors' centers, and, in some cases, classrooms, libraries, and computer labs. Often the most stylized buildings on campus, built in a specific architectural genre, they are regularly characterized by symmetry, height, and grand porticos, charged with heralding the various markers of school history and outward recognition – its name, motto, insignia, flags, busts or paintings of school founders and principals, and dated foundation stones. Whereas the main buildings of early all-boys' Chiefs' Colleges employed an Indo-Saracenic style of architecture, later all-girls' schools developed through more mixed forms. This was in part due to the fact that

many reclaimed colonial and feudal buildings established for other purposes and because monetary constraints limited the construction and design of new buildings.

Regardless of their origins, these main buildings came to embody school identity and meaningful space, symbolic of the quality of education offered within and that of those attending. In 2014, for example, SKV's most historic building, Kamla Bhavan, a colonial relic, was in the midst of returning back to housing administrative offices instead of student dorms. This decision was met with sadness and anger by a number of senior-student residents who voiced feelings of pride and attachment to this heritage-imbued space.[62] Kamla Bhavan served school ideologies of tradition, but its usage as a dorm made the space private, giving students a sense of ownership over the space and its history. In comparison, though the new administrative/ classroom building presented a more "modern," public face, it too attempted to root itself in tradition by displaying the school's historic memorabilia at its entrance, including an ancient Hindu sculpture uncovered while digging the building's foundations. Similar to Kamla Bhavan, Welham Girls' Tudor-inspired main building, a style somewhat common in the mountainous regions of South Asia owing to prior imperial encounters is held in high esteems for its beauty, its beginnings as a local *nawab*'s home, and its connections to the personhood and struggles of its founders. In both these buildings' cases, the past works to legitimize degrees of present-day prestige. Comparatively, MGD's strong local identity is reflected in its use of Jaipur's historic style of feudal architecture, integrating various motifs of the Pink City, while the more contemporary, colonial brick architecture of Mayo Girls' exhibits designs common to boarding schools in the U.K. and U.S., held as ideals of quality education in their own right.

[62] The building became a formal student "House" back in 1963 when construction on the school's new administrative/ classroom building was completed, a large, concrete building resembling a style common across northern India for residential to more large-scale school, commercial, and government buildings.

Figure 15 SKV's Kamla Bhavan (reclaimed)

Figure 16 SKV's "new" main administrative/classroom building (1958)

Figure 17 SKV's uncovered Hindu sculpture outside the new main building

Figure 18 Welham Girls' main building (reclaimed)

Figure 19 MGD's main building (1943)

Figure 20 Mayo Girls' main building (1988)

The walls inside these public spaces are home to displays of school accolades and credentials ready for viewing by visitors.[63] Main buildings are consequently the first to receive renovations as their age can signify established quality just as quickly as their dilapidation can indicate decreased prestige through a loss of disciplined form. They become analogies for the character of the school community as a whole. This notably became a highly voiced concern among the MGD community in 2013 when complaints regarding the condition of various buildings on campus, their blackening stone, plasterwork, and peeling paint, emerged among alumnae on social media, signaling anxieties over the school's decline. As institutions largely established on privately owned land, the onus is placed on the school's leadership to invest time, effort, and money in making the property even more valuable (Rose 1994:80). Needless to say, facelifts for the main building and dining hall were promptly arranged by the Board of Directors.

These spaces are also where student behavior is most purposefully monitored. There is, of course, the proximity to the principals' offices but also the increased expectations of decorum that go along with general administrative areas. While members of Student Council or particular seniors regularly appeared more at-ease (though still formal) in these areas, thanks to heightened feelings of belonging established through their close relationship with administrators and teachers by way of a share in power and responsibility in ensuring discipline, others conversely seemed restrained or uncomfortable in these spaces, standing in quiet modesty, displaying clipped speech peppered with "no, ma'ams," "yes, ma'ams," and "actually, ma'ams." These spatialized effects on discipline extended to most visitors and parents as well. Except on special occasions or without special invitation, these buildings are as far as visitors can enter and where

[63] Awards, trophies, plaques, and certificates; historic photos of school campuses, their founders, principals, and illustrious visitors; as well as annually updated wooden placards listing the schools' student leaders, Head girls, captains, chairs, and toppers (academic, athletic, service, all-round, etc.), many from renowned families or now publicly successful, established in various fields, are importantly featured.

parents must wait to meet with their daughters. As such, they became sites of near excessive niceties, seen in the proprietary dress, carriage, and manners of most parents with their *namaste* or *praňam* greetings, overly conscientious conversational styles, tea and biscuits, gifts of sweets, and so forth. Here they expressed varied feelings of parental belonging through the putting on of airs or visible levels of (dis)comfort. So while main buildings serve as society's access point to India's renowned Public Schools, these "public" private spaces also represent barriers to true entry. Like the walls and main gates that function as barriers to the masses, main buildings represent barriers to truly "legitimate" visitors.

From these main buildings, separate classroom buildings, science labs, performing and visual arts buildings, stadiums and gyms, school supply shops, dining halls, and several outdoor areas serve as secondary, "public" spaces. Like that of main buildings, the public aspects of many of these more private spaces are somewhat performative, organized into selectively choreographed moments wherein outsiders are invited to observe school happenings such as Fête, Sports Day, or Annual Day. In these moments, school guards, student and teacher escorts, or signage, direct visitors to and through these spaces along specified schedules. Yet it is within these spaces that we start to see a gradual shift in power (at times at odds with formulations in outside society) where female students, especially those senior, call many of the shots, exerting ownership over semi-public spaces and the power to ensure or opt out of discipline, a freedom of movement and being often restricted beyond the school's walls.

Except for those that tend to have specific teachers at their helm, classrooms are segmented by Class (*i.e.* grade level), section, and Stream in 11th and 12th Standard (*i.e.* Commerce, Arts/Humanities, or Science), identifiers that are written above each door (*e.g.* "VII A" or "XII Commerce B"). Even senior students, who may move in and out of these "advisory

classrooms" depending on their subject choices, identify with these spaces and with particular desks, an affiliation purposefully coached by the schools in order to encourage camaraderie and competition, and, in their wake, self-discipline. Similar to the schools themselves, efforts are made by way of bulletin board requirements and other themed competitions for classrooms to represent the collective identities of those within. Throughout the year, I observed Welhamites construct superhero-themed posters of their Class timetables; Mayoites decorate Stream-based bulletin boards with renowned women of certain professions (*e.g.* the Commerce room highlighted various "women entrepreneurs" such as Vandana Luthra, Radhika Roy, Ekta Jeetender Kapoor, and Farah Khan and "women NGOs" such as Kiran Bedi and Isha Weerasin); and a junior class of SVKians focus on the "plights against women" and "important social leaders" for a bulletin board competition.

But it was mainly outdoor spaces that at times demanded high levels of physical discipline as venues of athletics, activities, and formal ceremonies that operated as intermediary locations where female students could claim space, collective affiliations, and authority, often related to seniority and boarder-status. It was here that many students asserted their will to opt-out of classes or resist constraints on their time and presence in certain "public" spaces. *Addas*, or "hangouts," distinctively represented such reclamations, as areas on campus – certain stoops, benches, trees, tuck shops, or spots behind buildings – where student cliques congregated or bunked class. At MGD, one particular stoop behind the main building was universally known as the senior captains' *adda*. It was rare to see other students taking up this space; and if they did, it was with the cheeky grin of transgression, of playing a part quickly relinquished. Toward the start of the year I asked Ojasvita, an 11th Standard day-scholar, what the deal was with the stoop.

"It's like this spot where seniors hang out…mostly boarders and captains," she said. "Kind of a desired thing, you know? You come up seeing batch after batch of seniors sitting there and you get excited about your turn in the future. I mean…honestly, it's nothing special. But, you see guys having this spots all the time…you walk outside, on Jaipur's streets, the markets, outside Rajasthan University or whatever, and you see it…just these weird clusters of men having tea, whatever. It's changing in some places, you know, Delhi, or even by my coaching centers here in Jaipur there are some food stalls, coffee shops, *chaat* stands where you see boys and girls stopping, but there aren't many…uhm…hang outs for just us, outside. So, honestly that's kinda it too I think."

Figure 21 MGD seniors' *adda* [hangout]

In a North Indian context where spaces remain circumscribed by gender, where the public is still very much the venue of men and the private (or home) seen as that of women, where ownership over public spaces or feelings of belonging or safety therein are seldom felt, *addas* and other outdoor spaces, represent something different about Public Schools.

The House System: The Primacy of the Middle

Though, as we've seen, students are commonly organized by Class or Stream especially within the classroom setting, in many instances they are super-organized by House. If administrative and classroom buildings epitomize the public and semi-public center(s), Houses or residential dorms and other spaces of pastoral care denote the private, generally organized on a secondary ring or side of campus. Their middle placement indicates not only their more private character, but responds to general concerns regarding the safety of girls' living quarters.[64] Houses work to organize and disseminate Public School philosophies of camaraderie, team spirit, loyalty, mentorship, leadership, and self-regulation. Part of this alignment is evidenced by the names of Houses themselves, symbolic of individual school character, values, and views on female personhood and its role models. MGD's Houses, for example, are named for Indian and non-Indian women deemed historically significant including Sarojini Naidu, Florence Nightingale, Madame Curie, and Hellen Keller. Mayo Girls' Houses are named after Rajput queens, Meera, Sanyogita, Padmini, Karunawati, and Charumati while SKV's carry the names of the founding royal family's daughters (some of which attended the school), Madhavi, Usha, Vasundhara, and Yashodhara Scindia. Comparatively, Houses at Welham Girls' are named after several birds common to the region – Orioles, Flycatchers, Woodpeckers, Bulbuls, and Hoopoes.

Aside from a separate House set aside at each school for younger students, junior and senior students are placed into Class-based dorms within mixed-Class Houses. During my time at MGD, arguments for single-Class and even Stream-based Houses frequently arose among senior

[64] In the case of Welham Girls' campus, which as described was acquired piece by piece, restricted by city grids, a number of student Houses are located across the street from "main" campus. And though many students expressed great excitement over the daily opportunity to glance down the street toward their brother school, the campus's layout frequently raised safety concerns among parents, resulting in the installation of multiple manned gates on each side of the road.

boarders who stated that such systems would make studying for Board exams easier. There were worries, however, that this would increase the already common issues of Class- and Stream-based cliques while creating non-existent or unhealthy junior-senior relationships. The House system, instead, is meant to encourage *collective* identities and achievement through individual accountability to a group, relationships built on notions of belonging, traditions, character, and joint-outcomes. Each girl is a representative of their House as much as each House is representative of the girls that live within its walls. Beyond their roles as tangible sites of everyday livelihood, practice, and interrelations, these spaces function as abstract identifiers – "I am," for example, "a Greenie," "a *Narangie*" [Orangey], "a Bulbul," or "a Kan." As a result, individuals reap both the boons and consequences of their fellow Housemates' actions (or lack thereof). While each student is meant to feel distinct in her membership, she is also meant to feel a part of a family (*i.e.* her House), and all Houses are meant to come together to create a whole, a community (*i.e.* the school). In this vein, Houses at these schools were associated with colors that students wore on their school uniforms signifying membership and when the colors where brought together created what Welham Girls' called their "colors of unity."

The House system and its attending distribution of power through student-leadership support Public School macro-organizational and pedagogical goals by incentivizing values such as self-surveillance, leadership, accountability, responsibility, and teamwork. Inter-House competitions and point systems, seen by many students as even more important than inter-school or IPSC competitions, speak to these attachments encouraging team and competitive spirit while ensuring the self-maintenance of certain levels of collective decorum. Thus, Houses function as spaces of membership *and* participation. With MGD's large day-school component, inter-House

competitions afford day-scholars opportunities to feel a part of their House communities, even as some claim favoritism is given to boarders as they are able to practice after class hours.

Figure 22 (*left*) MGD folk dance competition, 2012
Figure 23 (*right*) MGD inter-House swim meet, 2014

In leaving these spaces, many boarders contend that day-scholars lose perceivable degrees of their membership within their Houses as well as, some would argue, the school. The rhetorical divide between boarders and day-scholars also extends to debates over who is more disciplined based on the spaces they inhabit and their attending demands. "The home," mirroring earlier colonial and cultural-nationalist dualisms, is often described by boarders as a place of indiscipline and spoiled luxuries, where parents, especially mothers, attend to the every whim of their daughters, cleaning up after them, cooking, washing their clothes, buying them the newest gadgets or trends in clothing, taking them out to dinner, and allowing them to attend parties. In contradistinction, boarders frequently described their hostels as spaces of learning to adjust with others, to be independent and responsible, and to stand up on one's own.

Systems of surveillance and accountability within Indian Public School Houses are thought to ensure and inculcate such experiences and lessons. The roles of House Captains and

Vice Captains as elected members of the Student Council extend beyond ensuring strong performances in inter-House competitions to surveilling the discipline of their batchmates and juniors. Students are frequently required to sit or line-up together according to House and Class during morning assemblies, meals in the dining hall, and special events. Depending on their members, certain House batches gained reputations for being particularly athletic, bright, artistic, and so forth or even for being *un*disciplined, a trait which, when all is lost, members seem to hold on to with a kind of unifying pride. However, council-appointed student leaders form just one layer of House surveillance networks. Each House is also fit with one to three Matrons, House Mistresses, and visiting House tutors, charged with the overall organization and maintenance of pastoral care and regulation.[65] Non-official policing is additionally performed by *bai jis*, who help clean up after, wake, and deliver messages to students from Matrons or House Mistresses. Even with these figures of adult supervision, the power of senior students and the pressures of peer accountability are arguably more pervasive. Many juniors admitted to me that they were *more* afraid of their seniors, especially senior boarders, than any adults on campus. Not only did juniors look up to their seniors, but seniors often dispensed greater punishments, from running laps in front of the dining hall to organizing occasions of public humiliation or general out-casting in the hostels. On a lesser yet more frequent note, seniors would also use their social status on campus to ask "favors" of their juniors, such as filling their water bottles or fetching things from wherever they'd left them.

Interestingly, even with their generally upper-class/caste character and attending entitlements, all-girls' Public Schools students would regularly differentiate themselves from

[65] Accountability to these ends is ensured through regular meetings with the schools' principal(s) and written logs kept daily within the Houses noting student behavior (*i.e.* completion of chores, timeliness to House assemblies, keeping personal spaces organized and clean, personal hygiene, noise levels, etc.) and things like call logs and home sickness.

other, newer private or international schools in conversations, not by what they *had* but by what they *lacked* in terms of space, arguing that this lack subsequently heightened their claims to morally superior discipline. My informants opined that while these newer schools may be quick to invest money in building vast campuses with newer infrastructure, A/C hostels, and technologically savvy classrooms in order to *liken* themselves to the Public Schools, they were ultimately "getting it wrong," as put by one Welhamite. Despite the admittedly beautiful spaces of MGD, SKV, Welham, and Mayo, administrators stated that these schools strive to inculcate certain lessons through a conscious absence of frivolities, possessions, and privacy. For the most part, therefore, their hostels consist of simple, open dorms with closely arranged beds and metal wardrobes, study spaces packed with wooden desks, singular common spaces with a small, older TV and desktop computer, shared floor bathrooms fit with Indian (and a few Western) toilets, a mix of bucket and faucet showers, and "coolors" in place of A/Cs. In fact, what alumnae would frequently recall in our conversations most fondly was their collective suffering in these hostels. Old MGDians whimsically evoked memories of sleeping outside on hostel roofs during hot summer months and SKVians and Welhamites recollected cooking potatoes stolen from the dining hall over water burners. Today, these late-night gossip sessions are over Maggi noodles, chip packs, and biscuits hoarded away from the tuck shop.

Still, this focus on "simple-living" is among other things somewhat circumvented by various House and school celebrations that happen throughout the year.[66] Even as spaces of self-surveillance and communal accountability driven by systems of student-elected power, it is

[66] From the monthly House birthdays at SKV where special dinners are ordered in from off-campus and MGD's "deck-outs" in front of the dining hall to senior farewells at Mayo where Houses are decorated with lights, bright colors, and thematic decals, prepared skits, songs, and dance numbers are frequently performed before everything breaks-out into a dance party. With that said, besides Mayo's House farewells, these events are not overly extravagant, but actually place emphasis on having fun collectively without frills, where if you want decorations or props, you have to be creative and industrious enough to make them.

important to note that Houses are markedly *less* disciplined than the more formal public spaces on campus discussed earlier. They are mainly spaces for enjoying with friends, studying and procrastination, stashing "illegal" mobile phones, navigating desires for self-expression and fitting in, camaraderie between batchmates, and the exertion of power through seniority.

Toward the Periphery: Belonging, Policing, and Indiscipline

Moving further to the peripheries of campus, one encounters various teachers' residences and, still beyond, the domestic helps' quarters. Having a large percentage of teachers living at the school, whether in the student hostels or in separate accommodations on campus, is something Public Schools strive to achieve against somewhat sizable difficulties. In 2014, for example, Mayo Girls' was in the middle of constructing new accommodations for teachers and MGD's principal often openly discussed her desire to recruit more residential teachers and the struggles it entailed. Similar to arguments made about day-scholars, non-residential teachers' levels of dedication were frequently painted as split between school and home. Although accommodations are generally available for teachers' families to live on campus with them, space is limited and duties to the school are substantial, placing restraints on free time and movement off-campus. As such, Public School boarding life often appeals to female teachers who are young and single, widowed or living apart from their husbands, significantly older, and/or have children. As many of these identities are still considered "at-risk" in northern India, residing on an all-girls' campus is thought to provide a safe, comfortable, and legitimate space for these teachers to have an income-earning career with benefits and perhaps educate their children at a prestigious school at highly subsidized rates. While some teachers were Public School alumna themselves, most attended some combination of non-boarding, Hindi-medium, Kendriya Vidyalya (KV), and/or

convent school. A lack of ability in English or lack of Public School pedigree was at times utilized by students to "other" certain members of the school community, as proof they did not belong, coming from "less disciplined" backgrounds. The spatial segmentation of belonging on campus makes teachers' accommodations symbolic of this gradual removal from ownership.

From here one reaches the outermost areas of campus arranged along the schools' barrier walls, the location of work sheds, repair areas, storage spaces, and the living quarters of the schools' domestic help, groundskeepers, drivers, mess workers, etc. In appearance, these areas are comparably informal, irregular, and disorganized. Even as many workers live off-campus, some on the boys' school campuses with their male relatives and others traveling upwards of 45-minutes each way to homes outside the cities, a small number works evening hostel shifts or has small accommodations within the schools' walls. These living spaces are as formal as one room flats or as informal as cinderblock walls and tarp ceilings, surrounded by over-grown natural vegetation. Even though many have spent their entire lives on these campuses with multiple generations working at these schools,[67] they have no real ownership over its spaces. A series of interviews with Mayo Girls' *bai jis* showed that they had worked at the school an average of 25 years and though many did not know their exact age, they often guesstimated being around 40 years old. Though they are responsible for the up-keep, order, and cleanliness of campus both indoors and outdoors, occupational hierarchies still very much based on caste norms and practices disallow them from touching or sitting on the very pieces of furniture they clean. As caste hierarchies historically relate to occupation, *bai jis* are divided and organized in relation to one another in several ways – full-time versus part-time employees differentiated by uniform; and sweeper *bai jis* (responsible for the more "lower caste" or "polluting" jobs such as cleaning

[67] Many fathers, brothers, and sons work in the mess halls, as groundskeepers, or as drivers, or work at the boys' schools.

bathrooms, sweeping, picking up dirty laundry, etc.) versus "normal" *bai jis* (responsible for making tea, delivering messages, and more general cleaning). These demarcations not only determined what types of work they performed and what spaces they could enter, but also their hours, pay, benefits, and job security.[68] Students and teachers sometimes claimed that much of this hierarchy was produced and maintained by the *bai jis* themselves, able to recall occasions when they saw "normal" *bai jis* treating sweeper *bai jis* poorly, prohibiting them from sitting and socializing with them, for instance. As such, the statuses, practices, and treatment of campus workers are often seen as a "them" problem, rationalized as arising from poverty and a lack of education, resulting in indiscipline and beliefs in "backwards," caste-based traditions. In related ways, *bai jis* and other staff members (usually women) have heightened connections to various religious areas on campus, both personally and as a part of their duties (see Appendix D for a discussion of religious, spiritual, and "secular" spaces on campus). Still, school methods of organization and regulation of space often enforce such practices. At Mayo Girls,' for instance, *bai jis* are purposefully shifted from House to House after a certain period of time so they do not develop a sense of belonging or entitlement to one space or House community over another.

Boundary Walls and Gates: Symbols of Enclosure or Exposure

Bethell (1998:10) has argued that private property-type regimes "ensure that people experience the consequences of their own acts. Property sets up fences, but it also surrounds [them] with mirrors, reflecting back upon [them] the consequences of [their] own behavior. Both the prudent and profligate will tend to experience their deserts." At their furthest reaches, these residential school campuses are surrounded by high outer walls of stone topped with barbed wire

[68] One sweeper bai ji stated that she had worked at the school for 10 years yet made only Rs 220/day while one normal "day" bai ji stated she made around Rs 10,000/mo before cuts working two daily shifts of 7:00am-11:-00am and 1:00-6:00pm, walking or getting a ride from their husbands on their scooters 45 minutes each way to campus, and a full-time bai ji makes around Rs 20,000/mo before cuts.

or broken shards of glass to keep unwanted outsiders out and students inside. The walls are interrupted only intermittently by iron gates, padlocked at night and manned by two to three uniformed *chowkidars* [guards] who check IDs, call up to the main building to verify visitors, and welcome day scholars, teachers, tutors, coaches, and approved vendors throughout the day. These gates serve as measures of separation, seclusion, and protection from the outer buzz of the surrounding cities.[69] As former "*purdah* schools" they still project duties of providing a safe environment for girls, allowing them freedom of movement in (semi-)"public" spaces. Though girls of this generation and social class experience comparably greater independence around their home cities, towns, and villages, concerns about safety and communal propriety are still present.

During my time on these campuses, I had countless conversations with students where they likened their schools to "jails" specifically pointing out how certain areas of campus were considered "off limits," they were locked into their Houses at various times during the day, and off-campus trips were highly limited and regulated. One afternoon sitting in the central courtyard of Meera House, for example, a Class 9 Mayoite said with exasperation,

"I get so tired of this campus. It's like being in a prison. We never go out and we never get to see our brothers at the boys' school. Well…I guess it's more a luxurious prison than anything."

Still, on a different occasion while relaxing on the stadium steps watching a field hockey practice, Priti, an 11th Standard MGDian, explained such experiences in a slightly different way.

[69] In late March 2014, a member of the Indian Mujahedeen threw a letter through Welham Girls' gates toward the guards' station threatening to bomb several well-known locations in Dehradun including the school to avenge what happened to Muslims in the communal riots of Kashmir, Gujarat, and Muzaffarnagar earlier that year. Parents were notified, a number of students sent home, guests forbidden from entering, and off-campus school trips cancelled for a period of time. While an extreme case, this instance exemplifies how the walls of prestigious schools not only protect but often encourage targeting as symbols of elite separatism.

"I mean, I'm from a *really* small town in UP and from a very conservative Rajput family. Like, don't marry a Rajput and get shot kinda family," she said laughingly but in all seriousness. "I go home, I can't really wear this or that, walk around this or that place as I please. If I want to go somewhere, my brother has to come with me, yea? So…some girls crib that being a boarder is like a jail sentence, "We have rights!" and all that, you know…when we have to be in the hostels. But, I mean, look at all this," she said gesturing in front of us. "For me, it's pretty great to just get to walk around."

A few months later during rounds of SKV's campus with Jasmine, an 8th Standard student, after dinner, she expressed comparable sentiments.

"In the beginning, the school felt like a jail because you could never go out but now I love my school."

She asked if I had ever heard of the Hindi expression, "*paheli*," which she described as a parrot in a metal cage.

"At the start, [the parrot] felt trapped and just wanted to get out, but after a while he came to love his cage. It's like that for us. You realize that it's a safe environment, with friends, so you don't feel so trapped anymore."

Describing her school as a *paheli*, which literally translates to "charade," "enigma," "mystery," "puzzle," or "riddle," exemplifies the complicated and contradictory ways in which these schools offer both exposure to and protection from the world, freedom and control.

Elite schools are often imagined as the carriers of a nation's moral authority by way of their superior discipline achieved, in part, through isolationism and protectionism from the masses (Khan 2011:33). Boarding schools, in this formulation, are "total institutions," regulating their members' lives so as to generate a particular character. By invoking Goffman's (1961)

notion of total institutions, arguments such as these establish boarding schools as "place[s] of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (de Souza 1975:16). However, many of my student informants argued that these sentiments provide a rather dated understanding of the situation, harkening back to a time decades ago when MGDians and SKVians would sneak over the walls at night to the movie theater across the street. Today, these students instead attest to the *exposure* they receive by attending an elite residential school, stating that they know more about the world, current events, and human diversity now than before.

"I know it's all girls," said Lavisha, a student at Mayo Girls', "but, even in an all-girls' school the amount of exposure I have got is beyond expression. There are people from everywhere here, from around the world, you can call it. Everywhere from the country itself and sometimes there are people from the U.S. There are people in my batch as well who are, like, U.S. citizens and everything, from Bhutan, Nepal…so we get to talk about what their family backgrounds are, how their country is in terms of education, in terms of riots happening, in terms of the government there. In a day school I don't think I would get so much of an opportunity to know about any other country or even an opportunity to know any other state in the country, so…in that way, elite means exposure. Secondly, the opportunities…you look around and there are rooms and doors of opportunities."

Here, Lavisha explains how the diversity of the school's student body allows for inward penetration of the outside world, creating a microcosm of Indian society (and global society) on campus as girls from "all over" attend the school. Afterwards, she additionally posited that many student complaints concerning *lack* of exposure or feelings of imprisonment are self-inflicted,

that the countless opportunities made available to travel, leave for competitions, and interact with the world outside are dependent on individual efforts. Similar sentiments were expressed by Prakrita, a senior student at MGD, who affirmed,

"Boarding school can only board you up if you want it to. I've seen girls who've come to MGD and left pretty soon, maybe half a year or a year later because they weren't able to adjust themselves. Whereas if you can adjust, I find you're up to date with everything's that going on around you. You don't go out and it feels like a head rush because you know what's happening. It's not like you've been denied internet facilities or newspapers or TV. I mean, I actually get into really healthy debates with some of my friends and talk about what's happening in the school or the country rather than just gossip. And I'm not overstating things, really it's there. I think it's a matter of choice. You're only boarded up as long as you want to be. If I'm like that kid who stays in the back corner of class, just glaring balefully at everyone around me, obviously you're boarded up, you're restrained, but not by the boundaries of the school, it's by yourself."

Within such student stances, it is mostly the individual that creates restraints and the school that creates opportunities – spaces are open to you, if you have the discipline to capitalize on them. However, it is important to note that there are "different spatial *and* temporal framings of empowerment" (Sharma 2008:3, emphasis added). It is, therefore, in the disciplining of time that all-girls' Indian Public Schools offer occasions for both constraint and freedom as well.

Temporal Discipline

Early one morning at MGD in late September, I stood with a group of teachers in front of the stadium waiting as students, now 10 minutes late, continued to make slow progress from their classrooms. The principal stood on the outdoor stage in front of the school choir poised to

start the opening *shloka* [prayer]. School captains yelled out to students to "hurry up," "straighten your lines," and "stop talking." Growing visibly irritated, the principal took the microphone as the crowd of students came to a quick hush, still jostling to form their lines.

"This is unacceptable. Only when you saw me approaching the stage did you decide to be quiet, to pick up your pace and run from the House of Science. You do what is right only when someone is watching. Unless you're being policed or monitored do you forget what is expected of you? And Class XI is the worst. What is the point? To prove that you are above the Board of Conduct expected for the students of the school? To prove that you are better than others? Why should we exert ourselves for your sake? You do not leave a teacher or a leader standing at a mic shouting at you. It's the worst way to start the day. This assembly is meant to set the tone for the day; it's a time to come together in prayer, to make some kind of commitment, and a time for communicating with each other. Character is what you are when no one is looking. We do not police you because we expect better behavior. It is important that you all realize that you are in the middle of leadership training here at the school and as such you need to consider the interests of the institution before your own personal interests. Learn to behave independently and respect people's boundaries. You shouldn't have to be told every day to leave space between the lines, to leave space between yourself and whoever is standing in front of you or behind you. It should remain unstated, a form of social common sense. There's a purpose to the morning assembly. Put yourself in the right state of mind. There is a time for silence and a time for speech. The assembly, meant for prayer and meditation for the day, is a time for silence, to focus within. I believe your yoga teacher has talked to you about this. This 'discipline' which is a tradition is gone. These are the traditions we need to worry about losing and that's on you."

With that the choir started the prayer and students were told to close their eyes and reflect. To this, many students followed-suit, placing their hands together in front of their chests and singing along while a few others simply looked at each other and rolled their eyes.

Similar to Welham Girls' Candle Lighting Ceremony, daily morning assemblies conducted at all four schools provide highly dramatized spaces where contradictions and inconsistencies are mitigated, discipline restored, and collective institutional values (re)established (Kapferer 1979:5). In this interaction, MGD's principal emphasizes the primacy of structured time and the importance of punctuality as matters of self-discipline linked to the collective. She states that leadership is more about selflessness than individual power plays, than entitlement exerted in making others wait or opting out of institutional standards of conduct. Tensions between discipline and independence in definitions of empowerment arise herein, where structured time serves as a symbol of upper class morality and a method of character-building but also a source of student stress, boredom, opportunity, and (re)claimed control.

Time-Pressure & Time-Waste

In his analysis of The Doon School, Srivastava (1998:46,47) argues that, "[T]he clock-tower was part of the system of meanings that made up the discrete discursive universe of nineteenth-century Europe," and by building them across India and erecting them at all-boys' Chiefs' Colleges and Public Schools they "marked, both literally and symbolically, the route the native might take to the realms of modernity; they represented the march of progress, man's control over the natural environment and, ultimately, the management of human destiny itself." They were symbols of the "rational West" in a land characterized for its "excessive spirituality and otherworldliness" (*ibid.*). Though formal clock towers remain absent on the campuses of all-

girls' Public Schools, concerns over the rational management of human action, or temporal discipline, are present, apparent in their daily timetables and annual fixtures.

In these northern regions of India, the academic school year generally begins in April followed almost immediately by a month and half long summer break spanning May and June before classes pick back up in July. In the months following, the academic year is organized around various religious and national festivals; school-specific holidays and events; as well as (inter)national, state, and institutional syllabi, exams, application deadlines, etc. School members must constantly adjust to, integrate, and prepare for these various activities and constraints on their time. Still, schools often pride themselves in providing their students with schedules filled with countless opportunities to expand their curricula vitae, to become all-round achievers with diverse sets of skills, and levels of exposure. Individual days are methodically divided into short periods of time for intellectual and physical deliberations, as well as rest, eating, studying, the upkeep of hygiene, performance of chores, calling home, tutoring, and so forth. This strict routine is meant to cultivate both bodily and intellectual discipline, separating solitary and collective occupations, times allotted for noise and those for silence. These timetables are usually differentiated according to Class level, for day-scholars or boarders, and seasonally. Below, for example, is one such timetable at SKV in the Spring of 2014.

Table 1: SKV Senior Schedule, Spring 2014

6:00-6:40 AM	Morning sports (11th & 12th Standard study)
6:40-7:15	Change/bathe
7:15-7:45	Breakfast (seniors)
7:45-9:00	Prep
9:00-9:20	Assembly
9:20-10:55	1st, 2nd, 3rd periods

10:55-11:20	Break (snack)
11:20-2:15 PM	4th, 5th, 6th periods
2:15-3:15	Lunch (seniors)
3:15-4:15	Activities/Cultural (coaching for 11th and 12th Standard)
4:14-5:15	Games
5:15-5:30	Tea
5:30-6:30	Silent occupation
6:30-8:00	Prep (group study)
8:00-8:30	Dinner (seniors)
8:30-9:00	Hostel assemblies
9:00-10:30	Prep
10:30-11:00	Lights out

Schools like MGD additionally hold end-of-the-month, "Project Days" where the last three days of each month are dedicated solely to the completion of various student projects and papers, and SKV hosts various inter-House competitions on Friday mornings. Weekends are generally less structured, revolving mostly around scheduled meals, tutoring, and those times where students are permitted to go outside their Houses to walk rounds, relax, study around campus, and play sports or games. In part, rigidity of school timetables exists to instill lessons of time management, that is, the efficient, effective, and productive use of concentrated periods of time toward a particular activity or goal. Punctuality, task-orientated focus, and a diversified daily schedule filled with hobbies, leisure, academics, and exercises of personal betterment are traits often associated with the upper classes as well as the type(s) of education they receive through the Public School system.

This formalized push to fit so many pointed deliberations into a given day, though, also creates tremendous "time pressure," experienced by administrators, teachers, and students alike.

As will be discussed at-length in the next chapter, the feeling that there is never enough time to finish syllabi, prepare for Board exams and competitions, squeeze in all the day's activities, and accommodate for special events was frequently expressed at all schools. Yet while Mayo Girls', Welham Girls', and SKV as almost completely residential schools experienced slightly fewer time constraints, time pressure was especially apparent at MGD. Having a large number of day scholars leaving before lunch meant that rehearsals and any activity preparation had to occur during the school day due to issues of safety and transportation. These overlapping responsibilities habitually caused students (and teachers supervising these activities) to miss class. And though one could argue that the MGD case represents *poor* time management and organization, students conversely contended that having to balance so many responsibilities on occasion actually *improved* their temporal discipline and abilities to multi-task. It required them to be even more efficient and proactive in order to catch up on missed classwork while forcing them to practice making difficult choices based on perceived levels of importance and immediacy, that is, they learned to prioritize.

Experiences of time pressure, as such, often resulted in students working to stretch the boundaries set by school timetables, breaking their rigidity by choosing to withdraw from certain activities or expectations. In this sense, time management was as much about opting out as it was about participating in every aspect of student life; and tread a fine line between disciplined prioritization and (un)disciplined "time-waste." While time-waste is referred to in the literature on gendered youth and class in India as something performed by only the lower or working classes, the uneducated, or illiterate (Jeffrey 2010), I argue it comes into play as (upper-)middle class female students make choices throughout the school day or year to, for example, show up late to class, bunk classes or school, feign illnesses to avoid standing at assemblies, miss

deadlines for assignments, and so on. While many students certainly bunked, were late, or missed deadlines for the sheer purpose of not having to do work, many times, especially at MGD, I ran into girls sitting around campus on benches bunking class in order to *do* work, usually homework assignments for their off-campus coaching classes. In these contexts, students saw class as a waste of time, as unproductive, so they would opt out in favor of self-study. So while many of these actions may be viewed as undisciplined, students often bunk as more an exertion of informed choice, as a *disciplined* management of their time and energy.

Time-Pass

Students also bunked classes in order to socialize and "time-pass." Craig Jeffrey (2010) in his work in the Meerut District of North India defines time-pass as the ways in which young, unemployed, lower middle-class men kill time or wait as a basis for youth politics, student activism, and mobilization. He asserts that time-pass is a particularly classed and gendered practice as you mostly see young, lower/middle class men engaging in time-pass and not young women since, as he states, the latter never really have idle time to kill thanks to gendered divisions of labor in the home. I contend, however, that time-pass can and should also be understood as an (upper-)middle class entitlement to boredom and/or leisure that emerges from overly structured and packed schedules, and as a practice many *female* students engage in while at school as they rationalize this time as their last opportunity to fully "enjoy with friends" before the responsibilities and attending time constraints of college, a job, and, most importantly, domestic and family life begin. That said, social class certainly impacts these arguments as more women within India's upper classes might not end up working jobs outside the home (either by

choice, requirement, or circumstance) or they might have more outside help in their domestic labors (*e.g.* hired labor).

Historian, Nita Kumar (1998), in her study of artisans in Benaras, reasoned that boredom can only truly be experienced in relation to "modern clock time." Time drags because it seems to pass much more slowly than the clock or calendar (or in our case, the daily school timetable) says it should. Without formally timed periods there would be no sense of time dragging or rushing by (*ibid.*). To this point, while most activities at these schools are organized according to rigid and over-packed schedules, where time allotted to certain activities does not always jive with time needed or vice versa, students frequently expressed feelings of being simultaneously bored *and* pressed for time. It becomes a question then of whether or not such practices that attempt to organize time in order to achieve such "upper-class" values as efficiency, task-oriented focus, and diverse skill sets result in the controlling of time or its opposite. Also, while certain class arguments concerning time management, time pressure, time-waste, and time-pass establish claims that those of the upper classes are more concerned about timeliness, the discipline involved in being punctual, keeping a well-stocked schedule, and the supposed morality therein, there is also a "cultural" component, whereby students often joked that Indians are, by nature, always late anyways and are, in general, undisciplined. As offered by one 11th Standard MGDian, Richa, for example,

"Even Indians are not that disciplined. We have this in our social structure only. [If] I am late to parties it's like a status symbol that [you're] important. Throwing garbage is just negligence and ignorance. It's just in Indian nature or in Indian climate that you get to become so ignorant of things. And every Indian in their childhood is somewhat naughty. Rules are meant to be broken, man! It's sort of [like] that. You make rules, we break [them]."

Richa describes how the relationships between class and punctuality are flipped in certain social contexts as disregarding time becomes an upper class privilege, to be late without suffering the consequences. It serves as a marker of status and exertion of relational power, where the waiter becomes relatively disempowered and their social status momentarily depreciated in the process. When students choose to show up late to school or class without guilt or remorse, they are in many ways exerting this same sense of power and entitlement, making teachers, other students, and the institution wait for them to begin. Though seniors and school captains are expected to act as role models in this aspect of temporal discipline, the opposite occurred with frequency. Such mediation was explained to me by Mrinal, an MGD captain and day-scholar,

"Earlier it used to be a fascinating factor, like, oh they get to miss their classes. And even in 11th Standard we were saying, oh, the badge, 'the official license to bunk.' Yes, those are my words," she added laughing. "But, now that I'm in 12th, I don't really want to miss classes at all. We have to because of some work and all. It's not that…we don't *intend* to miss classes... some of them, maybe yes, once a week perhaps we intend to. Others though…they use their rank as an excuse to miss class or call each other out for 'important council business.' Perhaps we get our juniors to do this or do that. But the juniors also understand because we have this *huge* pile of work so we can't force them, but they know we need help. For example, like, the other day I was getting late for a meeting so I asked one of my batchmates, '*Please*,' not order, I asked, '*Please*, please, please, just take my bag from the classroom and put it in the van,' because I can't possibly have the time to again go back to my classroom and get it. So, you kind of ask for favors. And they do it. Others maybe abuse it, asking girls to go arrange some food…boarders particularly ask day scholars. Obviously they stay on campus and everyone is under their

jurisdiction so they kind of have superior power than we do. But mostly they're just using these favors as a way to pull more time from their day, to…hang out, time pass, you know?"

Sachi, another MGDian, noted that senior students are at once the most disciplined and most undisciplined on campus as they balance responsibilities, expectations, and the knowledge that this might be the last time to have fun with their friends.

"This happens majorly in the latter years at the school because everyone says that this time in your life is the best time so we have to make it the best time of our lives. So you try and enjoy as much as you can. In tuitions, yes, you know that it's pretty serious business. And OK, if I'm not studying in school then *at least* let me study over there. That's the mentality."

Esha, an 11th Standard student who attended SKV before coming to MGD, echoed these considerations, "Maybe for some, time in schools is where they are most restrained. They go home over the summer, or expect after graduation that, oh I'll be in Delhi or Mumbai or Bangalore or even abroad, London or whatnot, being with friends, enjoying at university; hard work but parties and all too. For others, school is that time for socializing, for friends. They go home, or might just go to a college outside the metros, or get a job, or are in some marriage where all their time is spent there. None is for yourself. So enjoy now. That is why there is some lack [in discipline]."

In this way, many stated that school was a time and space where you had the "freedom to be yourself," as put by one 10th Standard Welhamite. Sitting together in front of the outdoor basketball courts, her batchmate, Dikshita, further explained,

"Being at an all-girls' school means it doesn't take that long to get ready because…well, it's all girls. We have our uniforms, we're not allowed to wear make-up, kohl, jewelry, or, like, tic-tacs [colorful hair clips]. Sure, a lot of us wish we could wear that stuff sometimes, but it does

make things easier, you know? You can sleep longer in the morning. And then, when you do dress up it's more that you're doing it for yourself."

Debates in favor of or against single-sex schooling and uniforms citing increased or limited time, confidence, focus, expression, individual and collective identity, or discipline in their defense are well-known, existing cross-culturally and cross-nationally. Far from gender-neutral, these deliberations primarily end up focusing on the policing or control of female bodies (and their attending sexuality). This is especially true in the North Indian context. As institutions that emerged in response to caste traditions of obfuscating the female form, these all-girls' Public Schools and their students continue to engage in related debates over uniforms, institutional and peer policing, and of "doing it for yourself."

Bodily Discipline

For MGD's 70th Anniversary celebration, the school's Old Girls' Guild organized a fashion show to display the history of the school's uniform. Inside the stadium, which was functioning as the "backstage" area for the outdoor stage, I watched as current students from the primary school to the senior class excitedly readied themselves with the help of several alumnae. The students dressed as the first batch of MGDians wore what would have been the girls' home clothes in the 1940s, while those dressed in the school's first formal uniforms, introduced over the next decade, wore either the junior students' light blue jumper, the white tennis skirt worn during games, or the blue and maroon *saree* of the school's senior students. Helping one 10th Standard student wrap and pin her *saree* replica, an alumna advised her to walk slowly and with a more compact gait to avoid tripping,

"You're not going to be able to walk quite as wide as you're used to. Walk within yourself. You've worn a *saree* before, yes? Well, then you know. Don't you girls have *saree* socials here anymore? It takes practice to be able to carry it. Just be careful as you step down onto the stage. You don't want to go and fall in front of a big crowd," she said with amusement.

Inside the stadium, another alumna helping a student with her 1980s uniform by folding her *dupatta* into pleats reminisced, "Every day I would have to do this, every day, back and forth. Repetition, you know…made us disciplined. I used to be able to do it so fast. You lot are spoiled," she laughed. "Your *dupattas* come already pleated by the *dobi* [washerman]!"

As I pulled students aside to click their pictures in their different uniforms, a science teacher came over to chat, remarking on the different outfits and giving students some last minute pointers. To a student wearing the school's current games uniform, consisting of white shorts falling just above the knees and a white polo covered with an oversized maroon sweater, she commented with disapproval, "What size is that sweater? You're practically swimming in it! You can't wear that. Go find another! Quick! We're about to start!"

As students began to line up in chronological order, ready to enter the stage, I photographed two of the senior captains, wearing the school's current, main *salwar kameez* uniform with pre-pleated *dupatta* and maroon blazer. "Ah, saved the best uniform for last, right?" I said jokingly.

"Exactly," Drishti replied, laughing. "Best of both worlds," she added, posing.

"What do you mean?" I asked, clicking away a number of photos.

"Well, you have the tradition," she said, opening the blazer to show the *salwar kameez* uniform underneath, "and then the blazer," she adding, flapping the blazer closed again.

"I see," I chuckled. "So the blazer isn't 'tradition?'" I questioned, making awkward one-handed air quotes.

"No. Not really."

"Then what is it?" I asked.

"Oh…I don't know," she said with exasperation. "You know what I mean. You tell me!"

Leaving me with my camera, the captains made their way back inside the stadium as a teacher called for help organizing the students and keeping them quiet. As I quickly jotted down notes from our conversation, an 11th Standard student sitting on some nearby steps, having overheard our chatter supplemented, "You know, I think she means the blazer is a Western idea. I'd actually prefer a more traditional formal covering that goes with the theme."

"Oh yea? Like what?" I asked.

"Uhm…We could have an *angarkha* or something," she offered. "It's actually usually a men's coat but it's cool."

Interrupted by a voice over the stage's sound system announcing the arrival of the event's chief guest, we rounded the corner of the stadium to find our seats among the growing crowd of alumnae and students.

As the chief guest's car pulled up alongside the stage, five junior school students dressed in brightly colored, Rajput *lehenga choli* awaited her, their *odhni* pulled up over their heads, poised to perform the school's "traditional welcome" or *aarti*. Afterwards, the girls ran to the main building to change back into their school uniforms, the guests took their seats, and the fashion show began.

Figure 24 Current students in school's first uniforms at the MGD alumna fashion show, 2013

Figure 25 (*left*) MGD alumna adjusting student's *dupatta*, 2013
Figure 26 (*right*) Senior MGDians wearing current *salwar kameez* uniform with blazer, 2013

Figure 27 MGD's "traditional welcome;" current junior students dressed in Rajasthani *lehenga choli*

Just as the upper caste/class female body historically served as a symbol of India's communal "backwardness" and eventually national "progress," the figure of the Indian school girl, commonly recognized by her light blue jumper, has become symbolic of female empowerment and gender equality in the nation over the past few decades by (inter)national (non)government agencies and activists. Take, for example, Sesame Workshop's international syndicates where in each country-based program, a new "muppet" is introduced to symbolize a local social ill. In India's version, *Galli Galli Sim Sim*, a little girl muppet wearing the easily recognizable blue jumper school uniform is used to bring awareness across the country to the importance of sending girls to school. Being that these four all-girls' Public Schools largely emerged out of upper caste practices aimed at making the female body invisible, much contemplation still takes place concerning the history of these schools' uniforms, the ideologies behind them, and how *current* school uniforms, dress codes, and other allowances for self-

expression relate and respond to various understandings of the gendered and classed body as sites of regulation.

Becoming a part of a prestigious school is a corporeal process, a result of "physical discipline," fulfilled through a series of mini transformations (Khan 2011:97). Not only do elite institutions have ways of inculcating bodily discipline through the use of games, sports, P.T., and training in general carriage, but uniforms, dress codes, and interpersonal interactions influence preferences and police acceptable forms of physicality. Knowing "what to wear" and "how to wear it" requires constant mediation between self, situation, and audience, and it requires practice. As put by the same MGDian who offered her thoughts on the school's blazer,

"There's a time and place for everything and you need to know that and hence, yes, be disciplined. But yea, there is a huge difference between formal Indian wear, ceremonial, and *puja* and festival…gosh, it's complicated. I still haven't figured it out. Then there's [sic] Western outfits and times where both merge as one. It takes a lot of practice."

How uniforms are worn, the intentionality behind them, their fame and recognition; markers denoting merit, participation, and position; occasional dress-down days or dress-up socials; or the act of wearing clothing identified as "traditional" and/or "modern," "Indian" versus "Western" are permeated and sustained by narratives of bodily discipline and boundary work. They represent the ways students mark belonging and separation as well as ascendency, comparing themselves to others according to class, coolness, "desperation," or degrees of "rustication." Thus, this section analyzes the ways girls on these campuses practice, exist within, and push boundaries of class- and gender-based notions of bodily discipline, including how they engage in acts of regulation themselves.

Within the Collective: Power and Belonging

Following a cold morning assembly in December at MGD, it was time for those applying to be next year's student leaders to contest the position in front of their Houses. Taking the form of "pressure interviews by tribune," House contestations are acknowledged as a school tradition. The different Houses split up across campus to separate locations as I followed Blue House over to the stadium steps. There, 11th Standard candidates, each in turn, stepped up on stage behind a podium from where they attempted to answer a series of rapid fire questions from their current House seniors. Isha, the first candidate to go, slowly climbed the steps and announced her name.

"I'm standing for the position of a Blue House Captain," she said loudly.

One of the senior students took a step closer to the stage, "*A* blue house captain?"

"Yes," Isha confirmed.

"*A* blue house captain?" the senior repeated, mockingly elongated, "*A*?"

Realizing her mistake, Isha shakily corrected, "*The* blue house captain."

"Geez. Look at you," reprimanded the senior. "Stand up straight. Why are you slouching? And say it with some confidence. How will you combat the juniors if you can't speak loudly?"

"So why do you think you'd succeed at this position?" asked another.

"I think I have the qualities…," she started before being cut off.

"What qualities? Like how you actually wore your hair in a plait [braid] today? I don't think I've ever seen you wear your hair in a plait these 11 years. Why now? Now, all of the sudden you stand before us and say you can present a good standard to others?"

Still looking straight ahead, Isha offered, "I want to make a good impression."

“Impression? So you present one self at one time, and another self at another time. Great,” a third senior stated rather sarcastically. “Also, what’s wrong with your dupatta? Is it…dirty?

The first senior piped in, “And now she’s decided to wear all her pins on it as well. Time to conform, is it?”

“I don’t remember seeing her at rounds this morning either,” added the third.

“Well…so much for a good impression,” concluded the first. Isha, looking confused at the sudden termination of her candidacy, stepped down from the stage.

One by one, I watched as students were, as it was put by a candidate afterwards, “Grilled, burnt, applied jam to, and eaten” in front of their Housemates. I couldn’t help but notice that a large percentage of the questions asked, or more accurately, the short-comings noticed and announced by the seniors, had to do with the candidates’ appearance, dress, demeanor, or carriage. As more and more questions were posed, usually interrupting any candidate’s attempt at a full answer, I pulled the school’s current Head Girl, who was only observing the event, over to ask her thoughts on the process and its focus on the girls’ physicality.

“I’ll tell you what,” she said, “this is nothing compared to what I went through. Knowing the ‘MGD attitude,’ if you don’t do this they’ll think it’s a cakewalk. They need to know the seriousness of the posts. This process made me stronger, for the other interviews, for this post in general…and how you look matters. It’s someone’s first clue to who you are as a person and what the school stands for. Are you disciplined enough? Is the school a disciplined place? Do you put [in] the time and care to present yourself…to make a good impression? Do you actually have substance to back that attitude? You have to think about your audience and your audience is constantly changing.”

Part of the corporeal process of creating a disciplined Public School collective, is established through the physical discipline involved in mandatory sports, games, hygiene, and nutrition programs at schools like MGD. The founders of the first all-girls' schools, Indian and British, were touted for being impressive sportswomen, skilled in horseback riding, shooting, tennis, and badminton, and were often regular spectators of cricket. Miss Lutter, MGD's founder principal, served as President of the Jaipur Sports Association and started the first inter-school sports for girls (Flowers of Memory 1980). She also introduced the National Cadet Corp (NCC) and marching band to MGD, groups that still exist on campus. Annual Sports Days also function as visual and performative culminations of this bodily discipline, as track and field competitions, aerobics, dance, yoga, and martial arts performances all lead up to the much-awaited March-Past.[70] This ritualized martial artefact performed at all schools involves a highly rehearsed, choreographed, and synchronized parade of students from each House led by their affiliated captains around the school's track. The March-Past marks both evaluated House discipline (it is the most highly scored event at MGD's Sports Day) as well as collective school unity.

Collective school unity and discipline in effect is an attempt to create equality, reward achievements and efforts, and instill responsibility to the collective through actions of the self. Uniforms are often employed as a way to create equality, by attempting to erase or at least downplay visible indicators of social class or bodily difference. In many ways, the uniform signifies an ideal, a balance of duties and rights, the individual and the collective, of self-restraint and self-expression. Snigdha, an MGD senior captain, explained this balance one evening to me in the school's stadium.

"I think your morals tell you what is right," she stated. "What is right is determined by the situation I'm in. Your parents can teach you that or your school can...but collective opinion

[70] March Pass was performed at Mayo Girls' on Republic Day instead.

decides what the system is. When it comes to individual decisions, we are taught about [the] rights of the individual, but we are also taught about equality and duty to others. Equality means that I don't get to wear flashy nail paint if the girl next to me is just normal. That's not equality. The uniform is there for a reason. It's *uniform*. Uniform means that everyone is the same as everyone else at the school. So discipline doesn't necessarily mean the individual is de-individualized. It's about equality and that's a right too. To an MGDian I think the uniform should mean all the more because it's a mark of *who you are*. It's a mark of that tag that's been given to you, 'MGDian.' It's worth something, you know? And it's not just something to just throw around. I really don't like it when girls just drape their *dupattas* and roam around. All those things I even tell my batchmates. You're not supposed to do that. Same thing with colored ruffles and tic tacs [hair clips], these are the things. It should come from within you. If you have a right of your own that gives you freedom to voice your opinions then there are also rights of equality that say *everyone's* voice is equal."

To this end, at a morning assembly a few weeks later a different school captain came over to a group of four, 10th Standard girls sitting next to me under the banyan tree, feigning various kinds of sickness and a twisted ankle so they didn't have to stand. After sending most back to their lines, the captain zeroed in on one particular girl, reprimanding her for wearing the wrong uniform shoes, not fastening her second button, not tying her hair back appropriately, and for having sleep gook in her eyes.

"And what's wrong with your *dupatta*?" she supplemented. "It looks really dirty. That's really not acceptable. You should have purchased a new one this year. You are at an all-girls' school and that means something. You should be having a certain level of grooming. Do you think you're more important than everyone else?"

In both these instances, student leaders invoke bodily discipline as a way of achieving equality in place of stratified power differentials even as certain methods of enforcement could, at times, take on characteristics much alike bullying.

Though students frequently cribbed about their uniforms, off-campus they became matters of identity, recognition, and pride – the "tag" of an MGDian, SKVian, a Welhamite, or Mayoite. As such, students were somewhat wary of change (*e.g.* the loss of MGD's "naughty boy" shoes to black sneakers a few years ago causes ongoing gripes) and often compared their uniforms to others, creating stratifications labeling some "better" or "worse."

As they serve to differentiate those who belong to a school from those who do not, uniforms are also highly involved in initiating new or ascending members within a school community. Existing students must teach those new or junior how to correctly wear and carry the uniform. Seniors at Mayo and SKV, for example, gave their juniors tips on how long they should wear their skirts while seniors at MGD would pass down knowledge on how to wear the school's infamous *dupatta*. In this latter example, those passing from 8th to 9th Standard go through a transition from junior school jumpers to *salwar kameez* uniforms and *dupattas*. In terms of this transition, students commonly expressed excitement over getting to wear the senior uniforms after so many years but also concern over wearing the *dupatta* incorrectly. At the end of morning assembly during the first week of April, the beginning of the new school term, MGD's principal sought to quell such concerns and assist the transformation. She instructed all 9th Standard students to hang back for the senior leaders to teach them how to wear the senior uniform, specifically how to drape the *dupatta* properly, stating,

"You should only use two 'proper' safety pins at the top of the back, not low on your wing bones or separate. It should hang down to the waste, not too low, not too high. The light pleat should be at the end. Listen to your seniors as they show you."

While helping fix a 9th Standard's pin-placement, a senior student admitted to me that she wrote an article about the MGD *dupatta* as well as the learning curve and bodily discipline required to carry it off in the school's newspaper right after she transferred in 10th Standard from SKV. Able to acquire a copy afterwards, entitled, "The Killer Dupattas and How I Annihilated Them (Eventually!)" (2010), I read as the student humorously anthropomorphized her uniform:

> It's been six months since I joined MGD, but I still can't figure out what the deal with my dupatta is…. Back then, I wasn't the only one struggling with our newly-acquired maroon nightmare – there were lots of others who, like me were afraid of being strangled by the same uniform that'd ironically (according to me) won us 'Best Dressed School' a gazillion times.
>
> I was at war with my dupatta. I'd wake up before sunrise to try to figure out how to 'pin up' the wretched curtain, sorry, dupatta properly. But the dupatta hated me back so no matter how hard I tried, I never got it right. The dupatta was too high or too low, too 'triangular-looking' or 'too-untriangular-looking.' I was pretty sick of it so I let it be – wearing it any which way I wanted, pins and all. The result – I spent a fortune on dry-cleaning because, to complicate life, my dupatta was allergic to water….
>
> Skip forward six months (like they do in TV serials) and it wasn't half that bad thanks to the huge number of random strangers I'd meet in school corridors who'd take one look at my dupatta, feel sorry for me and make things right. I owe my sanity and my neatness to them and their skills (thank you, corridor buddies!). I think I can handle a murderous dupatta fairly well now. It even has a name, Voldemort (that dark wizard dude whom [sic] no one really likes); and the fact that I have learnt somehow to make sure my dupatta behaves itself during school is one of my biggest accomplishments so far.

Uniforms are used to draw boundaries between schools as well as mark belonging within, bringing individuals and groups from the peripheries to the center, to spaces of ownership through a kind of corporeal discipline.

For all the collective unity and equality denoted by the uniform, however, I would be remiss not to consider their role in differentiating individuals and groups *within* schools. Public School uniforms and pins are also employed to construct and identify power or "responsibility"

differentials. Mayo Girls' captains were identified as "wearing the mantle of leadership" as they recited the school's investiture proclamation, "Give me, oh God, a sense of responsibility," while at Welham's Investiture Ceremony, one of the out-going Captains admitted,

"The actual act of taking off the jacket is very symbolic and emotional. It's literally like you are removing the burden…the responsibility from your shoulders and passing it on. It's difficult because, in a way, that jacket became who you are, and now you have to give it away."

Figure 28 (*left*) Captains' Investiture Ceremony, Mayo Girls' pinning
Figure 29 (*right*) Captains' Investiture Ceremony, Welham Girls' blazer transference

All-girls' Public Schools use "colours" and pins to signify certain achievements and participation in events wherein the *dupatta*, once again, often comes into play. While the regular *salwar kameez* uniforms at Mayo Girls' consists of simple, solid red *dupattas*, seniors who achieve high marks in certain fields such as academics, games, or co-curriculars are awarded a rainbow patterned version representing the five sacred Rajput colors in a special ceremony. A little less than half the senior class received colours for something in 2013. At Welham Girls',

colours are earned for single, double, or triple achievements in academics, games, and co-curriculars, the latter known as the Principal's Award. Pins have also become popular markers of achievement, membership, and general "coolness," worn on students' blazers and *dupattas*. An 11th Standard MGDian stated that compared to previous years when her older sister attended the school and students would differentiate themselves academically using grades or marks, nowadays since more emphasis is placed on standardized tests and extra-curriculars students tend to differentiate themselves by how many and which competitions they attend.

Figure 30 (*left*) Mayo Girls' "colours" with school and captain's pins
Figure 31 (*right*) MGD *dupatta* with co-curricular pins

Uniforms are therefore as much about establishing collective identities and standards as they are about creating and identifying difference.

Wearing it with "Class"

Concerns over girls' bodies, sexuality, and upper-class comportment influenced the forms these schools' uniforms took at their founding and thereafter. The *dupatta* in and of itself is a highly gendered article of clothing in North India. MGD's *saree* uniform was replaced over the years by several versions of the *salwar kameez* as the school's uniform continued to diversify according to age, season, and utility. Furthermore, this evolution displayed changes in mentality concerning what women should be allowed to do (*e.g.* participate in sports), how their bodies should be controlled or freed, how they should be seen as particularly gendered subjects (*i.e.* emphasizing or down-playing their femininity), and the acceptance and/or molding of Western styles within upper class Indian fashion choices. The *salwar kameez*, for example, countered issues in the 1950s-60s of inappropriate skirt length, a frequent issue with Western-style uniforms; was seen as "an asexual grown-up garment" that hid the body while still allowing young women to take part in sports and cycle to school; and appeared more "modern" and freeing than the *saree* (Banerjee and Miller 2003: 238-9). Thus, the *salwar kameez* was a way to be "Western without being immodest" (Castelino 1994:7). Previously a garment worn mainly by Punjabis in northern India and Muslims, the *salwar kameez* eventually became associated with youth culture and modernity thanks in part to its stylistic resemblance to Western clothes in the 1980s and 1990s (Sandhu 2014:44).

These narratives, shaped by now-familiar structuralist discourses of the traditional/ modern, Indian/Western, and private/public in reference to the female body, continue on these campuses today in many forms. Firstly, they appear in how many girls evaluate their own and others' uniforms. Throughout the year, I heard Mayoites laughingly put down MGD's uniforms as "old-fashioned," "rustic," or as opined by one student,

"They really lack a sense of modernity. I mean, have you seen their *dupattas*? They look like curtains!"

And in turn, MGDians criticized Welham's and Mayo's *salwar kameez* uniforms as mere gestures or performances of tradition – "I don't like their uniforms. Their *dupattas* are not even *dupattas*. They're just like these thin pieces of cloth folded in front of them like that." Or as put by another MGDian,

"Actually, Mayo [Girls'] is not an old school per se. They mainly wear their slacks and blazers but they do have these ugly brown *kurta pajama* uniforms too with this *dupatta*-like thing. You must have seen them at Cultural Fest. Yea, so they're just trying to give themselves a history, like us. I mean, they do have these really cool Rajput formals; that I'll admit."

Here, the student is referring to the senior student council's "traditional wear," a custom adopted from their brother school, worn on special occasions.

While in these accounts, uniforms are either described as "too" traditional or as elements of a "fake" tradition, there were also occasions when Mayoites and MGDians together assessed SKV's new uniforms as a "loss" of tradition for the sake of modernity. As one MGDian opined,

"Their uniforms…with that skirt and checkered blouse, is new. You've seen them, yes? Yea, they used to have *salwar kameez* uniforms like us, traditional-like. But I guess they wanted to go for a more modern look."

In conversations about school uniforms, then, "modern" often became likened to the non-Indian, similar to the eavesdropping MGDian quoted at the alumnae fashion show ("You know, I think she means the blazer is a Western idea"). Mayo Girls', for example, had an option where students could wear "traditional" or "Indian clothes" (*i.e.* the school's *salwar kameez* uniforms or their own *kurta pajamas* from home) on Sundays. In comparison, a 9th Standard Mayoite

described her blazer to me before getting on stage to give a speech on India's Republic Day as a source of confidence – "I really like to wear it. I feel more confident, more put together…like you should take me seriously."

But students were not the only ones who utilized such descriptors to evaluate their uniforms. Teachers at MGD often complained about having to wear *sarees* every day as part of the required "teacher uniform." It came up in more than one teachers' workshop as a suggested alteration and as a common gripe among female teachers as they walked the long distance from their classrooms to the dining hall and back for mid-morning tea.

"It's not practical! We're not making the men teachers wear Indian outfits," lamented an upper-school teacher on one such occasion, gesturing toward a far table. She was right. The eight or so male teachers at the table wore slacks with button-down shirts or polos daily, the only exception at times being the yoga instructor.

At the other three schools, female teachers had a little more leeway in what they wore. While some did prefer to wear *sarees* on occasion, most wore some combination of *salwaar kameez*, slacks or nice jeans, long skirts, *kurtas*, or blouses.

"It's old fashioned, making female teachers wear Indian clothes," submitted a Mayo Girls' instructor over lunch. "It's unnecessary. We're in the 21st century!"

The second way this took form was in student (and teacher) evaluations of *non*-uniform wear. Here, an understanding of the dynamic relationship among youth, class, consumption, and globalization reveals how consumer culture serves as a complex site of female participation and constraint, enjoyment and objectification (Lukose 2005). Ongoing tension and dilemmas over "what to wear" as experienced by these girls as they negotiate between "co-existing, often conflicting, discourses on high and low, local and global, old and new, and tradition and

modernity, become reflected in numerous ways in the fashions worn" (Sandhu 2014:51). In these moments, I often saw a reemergence of "class" narratives used to "other" groups or individuals in terms of the appropriateness, carriage, desperation, style, or balance seemingly exemplified by their bodies. As the MGD captain noted during the school's contestation, audience matters and is changing constantly; for her and many others, discipline is knowing how to present yourself appropriately and comfortably in whatever context.

Toward the end of January, sitting in a Pre-SC Arts classroom, I watched as students debated with their class teacher, Mrs. Paul, over the decorations and dress code for Mayo's upcoming Senior Farewell. The teacher was advising them not to wear anything "outrageous."

"Mind the dress you wear. Ours is a very, very old school. We have our own ethos, own traditions. We have to uphold that. We're not going to Westernize *ourselves* to that extent where it's not per our school. Wear something sensible," Mrs. Paul said, then added with bemused chuckle, "Don't worry about being 'hot.'"

A student in the back clarified, "So, it's *preferable* we wear something decent?"

"See, the word of focus here is 'decent,'" corrected Mrs. Paul.

"No, the word is preferable," responded another student to the laughter of her batchmates. "So you just can't look 'hot.'"

"What about lukewarm?" loudly interjected yet another to more laughter, the volume in the classroom rising as smaller groups broke out into their own conversations.

Trying to bring the room back to order, a student toward the front turned to the teacher, "Come on. We only get one day for two to three hours where we get to do what we want."

"You know things with the body are about restraint," advised Mrs. Paul.

"Oh…*restraint*," said a student somewhat mockingly.

Shaking her head Mrs. Paul stated, "I just don't understand why you have to dress up in short skirts or tight outfits for these events. There are no boys!"

"Ma'am, we like to dress up for ourselves. When do we get the chance?" answered a student.

"Plus, we'll click pictures and post it on Facebook so we like to look good," said another.

In this exchange are a number of things worthy of note – a teacher invoking the traditional ethos of the school to encourage students' sense of decency and bodily restraint against "Westernization;" and students proclaiming that they like to dress up when they have the opportunity as much for themselves as for the chance to "look good" on social media. Even without boys, these events serve as fun opportunities for self-expression but also for peer evaluations. This was important within and between groups of friends but also in the processes of establishing "pals." Pals were a phenomena present at all four girls' schools. While students stated that these relationships could be romantic, they usually were platonic friendships between a junior and a senior involving hand-holding, note-passing, favors, gift-giving, and frequent, secluded hang-outs. They were a matter of "prestige." As described by one MGDian,

"The pal system is about enhanced seniority. You're in 12th grade and someone else is in 9th grade. You're drawing a line where they are your juniors and you have no real reason to be nice to them. I'd say it's present at most all-girls' schools…at Scindia [SKV] they call it a 'junior friend' and a 'senior friend.' So it's supposed to be something very prestigious when you go up to someone and say, 'Do you want to be my junior friend?' An 8th grader can rise in status because she's hanging out with this senior… It *can* have these weird sexual undertones even though nothing is happening; it absolutely can. But I guess…it's one acceptable way of

projecting certain feelings. It's also an outlet for gossip. And more than that it is just prestige and I'm so much better than everyone because I have a junior friend or a senior friend."

"At MGD it is well accepted," explained another student. "We have pals – more than friends, less than boyfriends. They have a good relation. Nine out of ten girls have pals, some sort of crush. And like, there used to be one captain for which girls used to go mad. For her birthday girls used to act like it was Tom Cruise's birthday. She used to be flooded with gifts and cards and chocolates and roses. Some girls are called 'Casanovas.' It's always a class senior and a junior. Not the same. Boarders are the ones. 99% are the boarders. It's set-up, a structure. You have to pick a lower level student. They chat. I've never been in these relationships. But it happens! The junior kind of wants to be like the senior. Dress like her, act like her. It's kind of even like an MGD legacy, MGD pals. We are famous for this."

In comparison, one SKVian described the existence of a similar "besties" system by stating, "Some of the juniors, they really act as though the seniors are their boyfriend or something. They talk about them all the time. If they're around them, they'll give this smile, you know, all shy-like…because besties *are* something that's between a senior and a junior. It doesn't mean friendship. It means this specific *kind* of relationship. It's become a definition."

So though girls at all schools frequently noted that uniforms or the all-girls' structure diminished their abilities to qualitatively evaluate their peers or put themselves on display, such events and online platforms served these ends.

At Mayo Girls' actual Farewell event a few days later, SCs, one-by-one walked into the auditorium in brightly colored *sarees* through a receiving line of Pre-SCs bidding them farewell, most of the latter wearing shorter and tighter "Western" dresses along with sky-high heels. While watching these entrances an older teacher came up alongside me and after a few minutes said,

"It's something, right? …Girls in Western dress at the same time as in *sarees* and Michael Jackson playing in the background by an all-girls' student rock band? It's a new generation." She paused and then said, "In some ways, I think the students of this generation are trapped at the intersection of tradition and modernity, of Indian-ness and being Westernized. But then again, hasn't that always been happening?"

Most students, however, did not describe the experience and practice so much as being "trapped," but just something you (sub)consciously learned to fuse. A 12th Standard MGDian explained it in this way,

"While boys do experience this to a degree, it is definitely more an 'us' thing. It's about being flexible within the boundaries…. Yes, it's true there is still a difference made between what is Indian and what is Western, tradition[al] and modern…but it's a time of globalization so boundaries are merged and those categories do overlap for those of our generation. Like wearing a *kurt* [sic] and a pair of pants. For the elders, they are separate, like nothing beats a *saree* or full traditional *salwar* suit. But it does take practice to know when to wear what where. I guess with the world today getting, metaphorically speaking, smaller we have to adopt all practices and hence we wear clothes to suit the occasion. It's like you will wear a different outfit to [the] office and a different one to a wedding. Similarly MUN [Model United Nations] is a global platform and [so] we dress accordingly, wearing shorter Western dresses or whatever. We have Indian formals too but suits are more comfortable. And in terms of an occasion like Dandiya Night, it's a traditional occasion, so we wear that. And senior social is just practice for carrying the *saree*. There's a time and place for everything and you need to know that and hence, yes, be disciplined. But yea, there is a huge difference between formal Indian wear, ceremonial, and *puja*

and festival…gosh, it's complicated. I still haven't figured it out. Then there's [sic] Western outfits and times where both merge as one. It takes a lot of practice."

As members of the (upper-)middle classes, urban and otherwise, of a generation that has become globally inundated thanks to city malls, films, and online platforms, fashion was a preoccupation of many students at these schools. Jaipur itself is one of the textile and jewelry capitals of the country with many Public School families working as importers, distributers, designers, and shop owners. In my surveys a sizable number of students from all four schools expressed interest in becoming fashion or jewelry designers, with a few wanting to focus on heritage crafts and textiles, or become models. Even with these formal interests aside, however, many, if not most students, and especially those living in the cities, wore "Western" clothes around casually when not in school. This also served as common wear when they arrived at the university level. Some teachers, however, saw these consumption practices and forms of expression as marks of bodily "obsession," as put by one teacher, not just of generational difference but of class differences as well. On an 11th Standard educational trip to Mumbai and Goa, for example, the chaperone teachers became frustrated as students continued to complain about wanting more time to go shopping instead of visiting historical sites.

"It's this business class mentality," one teacher offered on the train. "Their parents have ruined them for life by just giving to them and giving to them. Money! Permission *dena* [give], party culture, all that."

A few days later when a large portion of students began moaning about having to wear their uniforms to tour a set of ancient ruins and about how hot it was, a few even pulling out electric fans, a teacher finally yelled with frustration, "You're Indian!"

Students also performed a great deal of policing among their own schoolmates and between institutions. One 10th Standard Mayoite admitted that,

"Girls in the hostel are always trying to regulate me. They tell me I'm unruly and rowdy because I'm not very lady-like. They say, don't sit like this, with your legs spread out. I love sitting like this! They are always saying, 'I don't know what you're going to do with your life. You should be more lady-like.' And you know, like, everything, your body language and your voice, my batchmates tell me I'm very guy-ish, I'm this, I'm that. OK, fine, I'll walk like a girl, I'll talk like a girl, sit like a girl, dress like a girl, but why not have a little bit of a different mentality? Fuse the stereotypes! Why not mix them both? Why can't you just change what the tradition says? And that's what I try to do but I'm really criticized and I don't like it. Isn't it my right? To decide for myself what is lady-like? Isn't that all this feminism we talk about, if you want to do away with the inequality?"

Similar to the evaluations made about MGDians' uniforms, girls at other schools also occasionally identified MGDians' *non*-uniform wear as "rustic," "cheap," or "desperate."

"They really have no class," said one Mayoite. "And it's not about money, it's about family background, how you dress and carry that outfit. Have you seen what they wear?"

I asked the student what she meant, "You mean their clothes are too tight or short?"

"No, it's just…It's not about too short, it's just…they can't carry it," she clarified. "We might be of the same class, but that doesn't mean they *have* class."

Her batchmate attempted to better explain by adding, "They speak in Hindi with their friends and use abuses. They're not humble; they're show-offs."

I found that some MGDians on occasion agreed with these evaluations, saying that a portion of their schoolmates were, in fact, "crazy when it came to boys." One student opined,

"Many girls come from such families where they never get to act as such so they get really desperate around boys, wearing whatever outfits to get their attention."

Others, however, called Mayoites "snobbish" and proudly claimed that the "MGD attitude" was all about confidence; or as put by another 11th Standard student,

"Being an MGDian is about not caring what others think; it's about independence. It's hard to follow the rules *and* be a trendsetter…so MGDians end up getting labelled as pretty undisciplined."

Closing Thoughts

Both discipline and indiscipline therefore serve as touted markers of all-girls' Public School character, the latter at times used to project student freedoms through non-conformity, the former responsibility or "class," with both variously reasoned as venues of leadership and "Independence with a capital 'I.'" It is in these tensions that female students experience and practice ownership over space, though hierarchically organized; push boundaries of bodily comportment among classed and gendered expectation of (self-)policing; and are controlled by time, bored by structure, or engaged in projects where time is made to work for them. Discipline, as such, becomes yet another site of mediated empowerment.

It is the paths and pressures of *academic* discipline, that is, the hunt for credentials and success on high-stakes examinations, however, that is up for consideration next.

CHAPTER 4

"Why our Education System is Killing Us": Public School Curricula, Examinations, "Mugging Up," & Private Tuitions

It was late January in a Pre-SC Arts class at Mayo Girls' when the Sociology teacher announced that the two projects assigned before winter break were due on Saturday. A hushed murmur of panic and laughter swirled around the room, wry smiles appearing on a few faces.

"What's up?" I asked Kavya who looked quietly bemused from behind her desk.

"No one has done them so they're all freaking out," she let on calmly.

Rolling my eyes with a mixture of amusement and exasperation I inquired, "Have you?"

"Nah…I'll just do one and copy the other from someone," she said, shrugging her shoulders.

"She won't notice?" I asked.

"No, she doesn't even read them."

"Then what's the point?"

"In *case* she reads them," Kavya said in a rather obvious tone and then turned to her classmate, hitting her on the shoulder.

The volume grew as the teacher stepped into the hallway to sign a few papers carried by the office's *bai ji*. Feeling a sense of wonder at the room's general lack of concern, I pursued another student, Anjali, sitting to my front, "Did *you* do them?"

"Oh yea, I finished both a while ago," she said, waving her hand in the air.

"Nice," I said, relieved at our seeming return to sanity. "What topic did you choose?"

Anjali laughed, "Why the Indian education system is killing us."

"Oh yea?" I laughed at the rather bold title.

"Yea, the Indian education system just teaches us to study, study, study, and mug up everything. ICSE is only all about studying. My old school was a CBSE school so there were more opportunities for co-curriculars and upgradations. ICSE is too much and all theoretical. CBSE is more practical, I think."

I tried to clarify, "So is the issue the Indian education system or just the ICSE?"

"Mostly the ICSE, but overall, in general, it sucks. It's our history, our culture."

Looking confused I asked, "What is?"

"This – rote-memorization, copy-paste. If someone can mug it up and vomit it out exactly in the examinations, they are considered intelligent, otherwise of no-use.

I asked if I could see the project. Grabbing it up from a pile in the back of the room, Anjali passed it over. I opened it up to the first page of content which read, "Hypothesis," "This study is designed to assess the hypothesis that the Indian education system has made a [sic] students' life hell by killing creativity and producing donkeys instead of human beings." About 25-pages long, the project consisted of diagrams, pictures, quotes, survey questions, and several descriptive sub-sections including: "What is wrong with the Indian education system, honestly;" "What school hasn't taught me;" "An Indian student's daily routine (irrespective of holidays);" "What is making the Indian system retarded;" "They may ask this on the exam;" "Cons;" and "My story." It also included a Venn diagram comparing "What we are taught" (*i.e.* "how to take tests, short term cramming, useless facts, outdated techniques, note-taking for tests, problem solving by recipe, how to cheat, how to be highly competitive") with "What we actually need" (*i.e.* "design, creativity, how to focus, curiosity, multiple perspectives, visualization, lessons in teamwork, learning using metaphors, storytelling, resourcefulness"), determined in her own opinion and that of her survey's respondents.

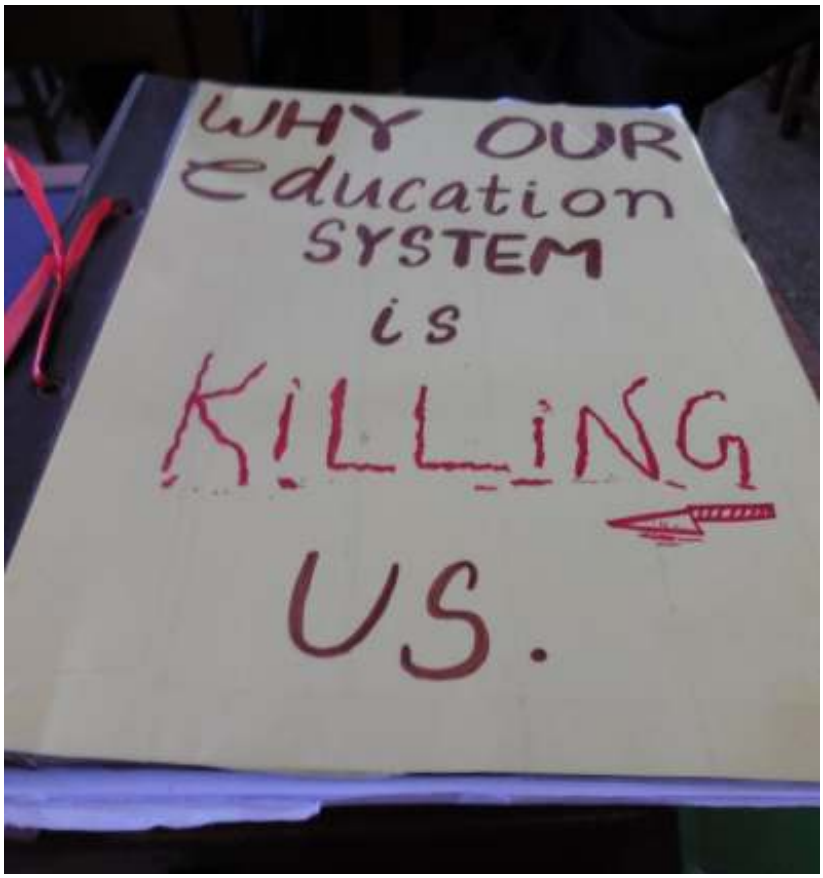

Figure 32 11th Standard Sociology Project, Mayo Girls', 2014

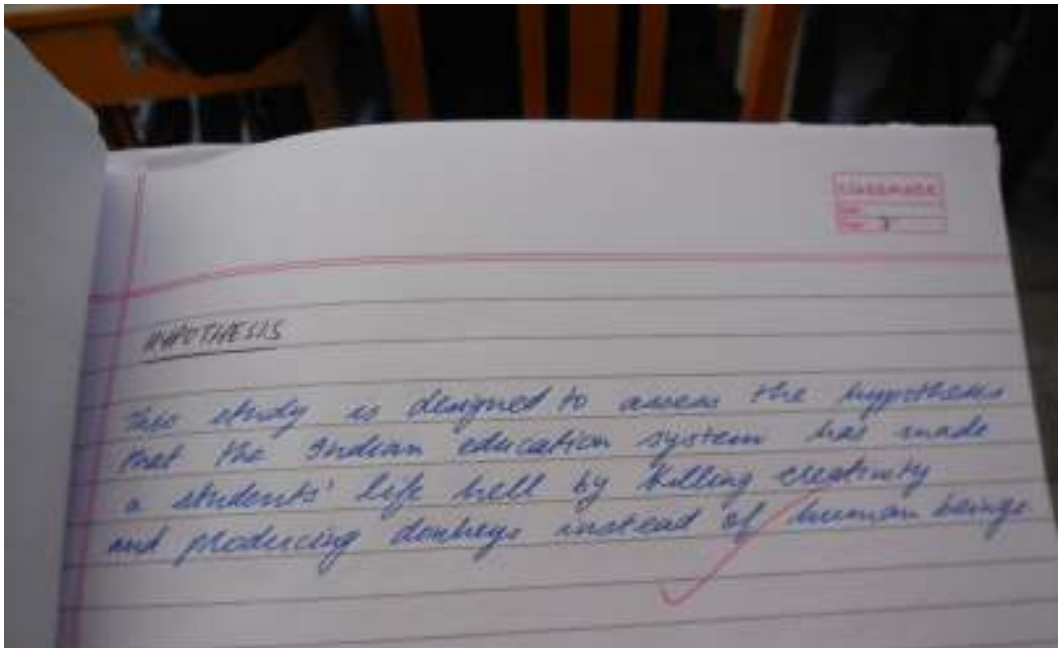

Figure 33 Project's hypothesis, Mayo Girls' 2014

Figure 34 Project's Venn diagram, Mayo Girls', 2014

While the tone of much of Anjali's project was sarcastic it represents some of the very real frustrations voiced by students and teachers at these schools throughout the year – concerns over current methods and venues used to earn the "skills" deemed necessary to get ahead, now largely related to the competitiveness of higher education and a preoccupation over examinations. In a system where students have to decide early on whether they want to apply to universities abroad or nationally and what Stream to take up by 10th Standard to ensure they attend a secondary school offering a particular Board of Education that will best prepare them for a series of highly competitive exams, exams whose formats and systems of evaluation largely reward "mugging up," misaligned to school curricula or graded by non-experts, students are trying to do it all, prioritizing certain aspects over others, opting out of classes on given days, or opting out of school all together for full-time private tutoring. These are but some of the paths

and pressures female Public School students mediate in order to achieve ascendency in contemporary networks of elite Indian and global education – to remain or become the elite of consideration.

Though there are those who still blame India's Public Schools for perpetuating the evils of inequality, privatization, "foreign" education, and lost vernaculars, many equally consider them models of superior education on the subcontinent. Public Schools' self-proclaimed and often-acknowledged prowess in English-medium education with attention paid to learning Indian languages as well as their claims to all-round development through their use of highly regarded Boards of Education, diverse subject offerings and combinations, co-curriculars, and service requirements are regularly cited. They are seen as responsible for developing skills, identities, social networks, and credentials that matter, moving students *away* from rote-memorization to methods of higher-order learning and setting them up for success, positions of leadership, and (inter)national competency. Bourdieu (1977, 1991) in his well-known works called this the (re)production of capital; Lareau (2003), "concerted cultivation;" and Demerath (2009), "hypercredentialization," or the practice of over-stuffing resumes. However, stiff competition for seats within Indian higher education and the intensified importance of exams are challenging associations once held between Public School credentials and subsequent forms of elite access. Today, their co-curriculars are simultaneously heralded and blamed for taking up too much time; school classes and Board exams have diminished in importance while that of college entrance exams has increased; and the infiltration of private coaching, often Hindi-medium, is arguably undermining the long-proposed superiority of education received at English-medium boarding schools. This has created dilemmas for students as well as Public Schools.

Though development discourses regularly identify access to schooling as the main stepping stone to girls' empowerment, especially when it's connected to "quality" schools like those in the IPSC, what is taught in such institutions and, more importantly, how it aligns with subsequent gatekeeping devices has created paradoxes within this schema. The overriding importance of competitive examinations, needed to gain access to renowned universities or courses, is now paramount, making secondary school no longer the culmination of status acquisition, future security and autonomy, or purported empowerment. The processes and "tools" students must learn to beat the system, to achieve success in the immediate, are laced with rather disempowering experiences of stress, confusion, and disappointment. Often emerging as difficult decisions in need of mediation, this system also results in the existence of false choices as, for example, failing to score above a certain cut-off may result in the system essentially choosing for you. For girls, in particular, success in these protocols frequently offers better chances of access and autonomy, but also delay or put-off marriage as the end-all of their educational strivings. I came across quite a few students who felt these related, additional pressures. An 11th Standard MGDian, for example, told me that her parents recently presented her with an ultimatum – score high enough marks to gain admission to a top 10 engineering college or stay in Jaipur, where she could attend a local (albeit significantly poorer quality) college. She stated that her parents didn't think it worth the risk to allow her to live far away from home if it wasn't for a top 10 school. Comparably, a senior SKVian told me that since she didn't receive top marks on her Boards that year, her parents were settling on getting her married, "Perhaps, if anything, I'll take up some part-time, correspondence course or something," she said. Thus, though access to a Public School can bring about great opportunities and degrees of future assurance, as their networks of support and tags still do mean *something*, things are not always so straight forward.

In this sense, all-girls' Public Schools have themselves encountered various pressures to adjust in order to retain their abilities to distribute capital, integrating test-prep into their frameworks while balancing efforts to keep their proposed "essential" character, centered on "whole person" education. This duel approach has at times negatively impacted teachers' motivations while heightening pressures that leave students feeling confused, stressed, over-committed, fearful of missing out, or simply disengaged. As the apex of test prep, private tutoring exemplifies the fracturing of this global education system where "successful" students work to become masters of rote-memorization to get ahead and crack an exam but are then largely unprepared to engage, think on their own, express their interests, or verbalize an opinion once they get where they're going, skills which all-girls' Public Schools have prided themselves with inculcating since their inception. And though many students call for the importance of such skills and Public Schools' abilities to impart them, they also admit how they are frequently compromised or deemed unimportant, at least in the immediate. Here, "successful" educational involvement requires the employment of a kind of learned utilitarianism.

As such, this chapter sets out to examine the very dynamics of this system of examination pressure, both scholastically – on curricula, pedagogy, learning, and motivation – as well as socially – on the tags, networks, and credentials gained or broken – on the choices made and methods utilized by female Public School students, often in reference to their families, as they learn, navigate, and act upon various requirements to success. It is an examination told through the narratives of administrators and teachers, newly challenged providers of future elite access, but also students like Anjali, popularly considered India's *winners* in education's (inter)national "race to the top."

Boards of Education:
Local, National, and Global Markers of (Mis)Alignment

Divanshi was a Class IX student at Mayo Girls' that I ran into almost daily on the stairs to the library. I knew her to have a talent for squash and for latching onto conversations taking place on the 2nd floor balcony between classes. She was also a bit of a loner. After lunch it was common to find her sitting on the tiny patch of grass in front Meera House, on cooler days using her blazer as a buffer between her pants and the ground, reading. Plopping down next to her one afternoon, I asked why she was sitting by herself. With the kind of casualness that suggested she didn't worry about it too much, Divanshi shrugged and stated that she wasn't particularly close to any of the girls at Mayo, adding that she had switched schools a number of times.

"Well…first I was at DPS [Delhi Public School], which is a CBSE school. So my base was built according to the CBSE. But then I was thinking that I really need to build up my English, if I want to go abroad after passing out…so I thought to switch."

"You mean for college?" I asked.

"Yea…I'm thinking Columbia, Harvard, so…you go to Columbia, right? So, obviously I got to thinking with my father that I should switch to an ICSE school. So we inquired into Welham Girls' in 7th [Standard] and after some requirements, an interview and what not, I earned admission.

"So then why did you switch to Mayo Girls' in 9th?" I wondered.

"Because…Welhams [sic] was no longer number one that year; it was Mayo," Divanshi stated rather matter-of-factly.

"So you switched because of the school ranking?" I clarified. "Did you know that Welham Girls' was ranked number one again this year and Mayo Girls' went to number two?"

"Oh, really? No…," there was a sizable pause as she considered the news. "Well…it's closer to my hometown anyway," she reasoned.

For Divanshi, the preoccupation over acquiring and balancing credentials and skills, those needed to get ahead and be successful, are firstly embedded in choosing the "right" school, one with a name ("tag"/history), high ranking, and suitable form, but also one affiliated to a particular Board of Education. Whether a school is associated with a state Board, the Central Board of Education (CBSE), Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE), and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) influences its position within popular discourses concerning education "quality." In determining or at least strongly influencing school curricula, subject offerings, textbooks, pedagogy, medium(s) of instruction, and types of evaluations, Boards are also considered in discourses concerning what and how you study, perceived local-national-global orientations, and whether they are well-aligned to certain entrance examinations and methods of university admissions. The relationships between school, Board, examinations, and access to higher education, however, were not always so intertwined, but show a progression from colonial regulation, increased access after independence, to intense competition and tailored trials of competence.

True to colonial agendas of categorization and control, British educational reformers worked to formalize and standardize curricula, pedagogy, and language medium on the Indian subcontinent, eventually prioritizing British models of schooling and the English language. These projects succeeded in establishing early school hierarchies where those aligned to the Senior Cambridge exam were thought to offer the kind of education prioritized under the imperial Raj for future social and occupational positions of status. Even when the first Indian Board of Education, the U.P. Board of High School and Intermediate Education, Allahabad, was

set up in 1921in the regions of Rajputana, Central India, and Gwalior by the United Provinces Legislative Council ("CBSE India About Us"), the foreign-based Senior Cambridge system was still considered better quality, now linked to English-medium education and to more prestigious schools, including the first all-girls' Public Schools. Old Girls at MGD laughingly recalled writing their exams in special blue ink, less likely to run when wet, as they were shipped (quite literally) back to England for grading once a year. Most, however, stated that there wasn't the same amount of pressure to score well as today. For one, many girls did not move on to higher education but used their schooling experiences as a way to acquire skills and an institutional tag useful in marriage arrangements; or for those who did, competition was relatively low and family or school name often went far enough to gain admission.

With Indian independence came calls for a removal of the foreign Senior Cambridge system in place of an All-India Examination. As a result, the Board of High Schools and Intermediate Education, Rajputana expanded its jurisdiction in 1952, changing its name to the currently recognized Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE); and an autonomous Cambridge Syndicate known as the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (ISCE) was established in 1958. Both were headquartered in Delhi and responsible for conducting the 10+2 system of examinations (*i.e.* the Standard X secondary school exam and the Standard XII intercollege level exam) (*ibid.*). By the early 1970s the foreign Senior Cambridge was largely superseded by the ISCE, which became the main Board affiliate of Public Schools such as MGD, SKV, and Welham. State universities grew and with them access to higher education, keeping competition relatively low. Alumnae recalled how Board exam marks in the 70th and 80th percentile were considered well on par with admission standards. In the following decades, after merging with the Delhi Board of Secondary Education, CBSE-affiliation exploded

across the country, seen as more highly regarded and regulated than its state-Board counterparts with several Public Schools soon changing suit.[71] As such, schools located in "peripheral" locations throughout the country began claiming their worth by affiliating themselves with the CBSE, or Delhi-based "center" (LaDousa 2014).[72] In 1989, around the same time that Commerce was introduced as a Stream in addition to Science and Humanities/Arts, MGD switched from its Senior Cambridge-ICSE roots to the CBSE; and while SKV similarly changed over, Welham Girls' and Mayo Girls' stayed with the ICSE even as their brother schools transitioned over as well.[73] Much of this was related to the rise of competition due to an increase in applications and reservations through the Mandal Commission Report in 1989,[74] making Board and Indian college entrance exams, considered increasingly aligned to the CBSE, matter more. By the time I arrived on these Public Schools' campuses in 2013-14, students (usually coming from the "general classes," *i.e.* unreserved classes/castes) regularly lamented how Board and entrance exam scores in certain subjects even in the 98th percentile were often not enough to gain admission.

Historically, these discourses have worked to establish a singular dichotomy between those who participate in the state-Boards (considered more local, vernacular, and unregulated) and those in the CBSE-ICSE-IB patterns (comparably national/global, English medium, and

[71] In total, the CBSE is affiliated with over 15,800 schools, mainly independent and private schools though with a sizable portion of government-aided schools, Kendriya Vidylalayas, and Jawahar Novodaya Vidyalayas as well (www.cbse.nic.in/welcome, "About Us," accessed on Jan/30/16).
[72] Even today, Chaise LaDousa, for example, has found that schools in Varanasi (a "peripheral" city in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh) regularly claim association with certain Boards even if they are not true simply to "claim prestige, specifically of an English-medium ambience" (2014:117).
[73] The Doon School, Dehradun currently offers the ISC examination and the IB diploma.
[74] The Mandal Commission report affirmed the practice of affirmative action under Indian law whereby members of lower castes known as the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs) were given exclusive access to a certain quota of government jobs and public university seats.

standardized).[75] However, as seen with Divanshi, lines of difference in terms of meaning, value, identity, experience, and outcome are now commonly drawn *within* this latter "category" as well. With its roots in the Senior Cambridge, the ICSE was often described as not completely "Indian" but relatively international or foreign while the CBSE was considered more local or nationally grounded by my informants. Part of this distinction was based in the ICSE's additional focus on English. Whereas the ICSE has two separate subject requirements and exam papers on "English Language" and "English Literature," the CBSE only has one. This also added to students and teachers describing the ICSE curriculum as "difficult," "theoretical," "vast," or "in-depth" compared to the CBSE which was thought of as "easier" or "more practical." Differences in local-national-global orientations were also based in how aligned these Boards' Class XII exams were to Indian or international college entrance exams. Here, the CBSE is often described as being more aligned to the requirements of Indian higher education, for those interested in staying in-country especially for something like an IIT (*i.e.* Indian Institute of Technology). Though the ICSE also aligns to Indian college entrance requirements in a number of ways, it is not considered as seamless a fit, particularly for those in the Science stream. The ICSE is therefore thought to prepare students more for college requirements abroad, in say the U.S., the U.K., or Australia, where evaluations in specific subject-matter are more generalized, if not unnecessary, at the application stage. Divanshi, interested in bettering her English skills and planning to apply abroad for college, decided to switch to an ISCE school. The IB, for purposes of comparison, introduced to India in 1976, is considered almost if not completely misaligned with in-country requirements, leaving universities abroad as the only real option for students coming from these school programs.

[75] The CBSE and ICSE have also established a growing international presence, the former with almost 200 affiliated schools in 23 countries and the latter in 4 countries as of 2014 (www.cbse.nic.in/welcome; www.cisce.org/council.aspx, accessed on Jan/30/16).

Consequently, affiliations to certain Boards many times represent why students attend or may decide to switch schools prior to 10th Standard, before Board exams begin. And this addendum, "prior to 10th Standard," is key since the longer you stay at a particular "type" of school, generally the harder it is to switch. Though transfer restrictions are largely prescribed by Board and school admissions' policies,[76] these policies are rooted in the idea that individuals are shaped by their school Board experiences and expectations, taking on certain related characteristics, dispositions, and skills over time. As Devanshi stated above, "my base was built according to the CBSE." Thus, the more time spent at a CBSE school, the more likely a student was considered "different," "misaligned," or unable to adjust or match-up if they switched to an ICSE school, or vice versa, not only to their new school's subject-matter and standards, its styles of learning and practice, but also to its culminating exams and paths to higher education.

Boards, Schools, Streams, Subjects, Tuitions: The Paths & Pressures of Exam Prep

Rohini, a 12th Standard SKVian originally from the northwestern state of Bihar, expressed similar apprehensions over choosing the "right" school and Board of Education according to her "base" and future goals. From 1st through 5th Standard she attended a private, co-ed, convent school.

"It was an Anglo-Indian school so mainly those people were Britishers and it was convent and not CBSE based. They had a separate syllabus…. but I had a mind to switch. I was deciding, okay, CBSE school or ICSE school?"

[76] For example, even though the Class X CBSE Board was made optional a few years back, if you are trying to switch from an ICSE school to somewhere like SKV you have to take and score well on the Class X CBSE exam.

She ended up attending a co-ed, residential school on the CBSE pattern in Jharkhand. Rohini then switched again to SKV in 9th Standard, signaling both the conclusion and opening of a new round of considerations.

"Should I go for Mayo or SKV? My parents only knew of two proper girls' schools. I decided on SKV as I would have spent my entire 9th adjusting and spoiling my base in CBSE as Mayo is ICSE and was very far, in Ajmer. And then I was here and feeling secure. 9th and 10th showed me a bit of real life as we had that holistic approach or what-not with CCE, co-curriculars and all. Then again, I thought to switch schools in 11th. I had an interest in Maths [sic] so after 10th either I was going to take PCM [Physics, Chemistry, Math] in Science or Humanities with Maths. So with PCM, I was thinking switch to a school more suited to Science or a day-school where I could take up tuitions…. So I applied to the AFO [Air Force] School in Delhi and [to] Woodstock. I got in, but then I decided to stay at SKV; and I took Humanities here because I felt that Science with so many co-curriculars and activities, many of which I'm already involved in, well…you just cannot with Science."

Though often posed as a decision over Board or school, as Rohini notes, choices also emerge over Streams, subject combinations, extra-curriculars, and the availability of private tutoring (known locally as "tuitions" or "coaching"). All serve as sources of opportunity (and anxiety) for students in terms of their alignment to examinations and future orientations.

Firstly, societal and familial dispositions persist concerning Stream (*i.e.* occupational) prestige. At Welham Girls', a Dean and teacher for almost 20 years stated, for instance, that there is still pressure placed on students to enter the sciences, especially by older relatives in joint families. While the mentality is slowly changing, certain stereotypes still exist that suggest weaker students take up the Humanities while the brightest students take up Science whereby

those professions, such as medicine and certain types of engineering, followed by those possible through the Commerce stream, are thought to offer the right balance of stability, safety, and prestige for girls. Sitting in the Dean's office, a beautiful room of painted wooden trusses that used to serve as the *nawab*'s library, she detailed her perceptions of the dilemma.

"Here at Welhams [sic], we provide overall development with various subjects and combinations. Students can realize their own potential, take up extra-curriculars, explore. We don't allow them to go into Science if they're not doing well. Parents can withdraw them to go to these factories, but then, often the girls want to come back but they can't because the Board doesn't allow it [past 11th Standard]. There are even some schools that succumb to parental pressures and don't even offer Humanities anymore. There are many that exist here in Dehradun. So many parents insist that their children take up mathematics and they have a terrible time. It's a matter of family prestige. Then we see many students starting in Science due to these pressures but then realizing they can't handle it so they switch to Commerce. That's why we're starting to have an overabundance of Commerce students. We're going to be a country of chartered accountants."

Not only are the curricula offered for certain Streams (*e.g.* Science), particularly under certain Boards (*e.g.* ICSE), considered inadequate preparation for a number of Indian entrance exams (*e.g.* medical and engineering), but particular Public Schools have earned "reputations" for being better or worse in specific Streams often due to perceived faculty prowess or, mainly, their access to external coaching.

Though students commonly echoed the Dean's perspective that Public Schools afforded them comparable freedom in combining different subjects within and without their Streams to

create more individualized specializations,[77] many nevertheless maintained that the levels of memorization and test prep necessary to score well on entrance exams demanded the tailored focus of private tuitions, leaving students like Rohini deliberating over whether to abandon residential Public Schools when coaching is not provided or is thought to offer better preparation than their current school or Board.

Teachers at Mayo and Welham Girls', however, often told me that far fewer students at their schools skipped class, took tuitions, or left school for coaching than in boarding-cum-day schools like MGD for three main reasons: (a) their students came to a residential school for a reason; it was a choice made with the knowledge that coaching would not be regularly available; (b) having all students on campus all day long meant you didn't have to try and fit in everything prior to lunch; and (c) a larger percentage of their students applied to colleges abroad and most coaching was for those interested in taking India-based entrance exams. Though aspects of these explanations held true, at Welham Girls', 87.2% (n=211) of surveyed students in 10th through 12th Standard stated that they attended some kind of tuitions, meaning only 12.8% (n=31) did not; and at Mayo Girls', 81.2% (n=173) attended tuitions while 18.8% (n=40) did not. In comparison, those numbers among polled MGDians came out to 70.3% (n=232) and 29.7% (n=98), respectively, indicating that *fewer* students in the sample attended tuitions at the day-boarding school. What's more, many students I encountered at the residential schools had attended tailored coaching classes in the past *specifically* to prepare for the Mayo and Welham Girls' entrance exams and interviews, gatekeeping devices no longer present at MGD. And though, as a reminder, the Right to Education (RTE) Act (2010) mostly banned school entrance

[77] For example, even though PCB (physics, chemistry, biology) is a common path for Science stream medical students and PCM (physics, chemistry, math) for Science stream engineering students, Public School students can also take-up subjects like psychology, sociology, or fine arts as well to prepare for alternative entrance exams and career concentrations like architecture or design.

exams, arguing that such private tutoring largely undermined arguments of "merit," completely residential Public Schools are exempt from this clause.

Outside these findings, though, enrollment numbers in certain Streams at completely residential schools do, in fact, tell a story. Class XI and XII Science enrollments at SKV, Welham, and Mayo, for example, tend to be significantly lower than in Commerce (the most popular stream) and Arts/Humanities (a growing stream). This is not for lack of interest but because of perceived school strength in certain subjects and, predominantly, because of students leaving after 10th Standard for coaching. While SKV and Welham attempt to make up for lost Science students through new admissions in Class XI,[78] Mayo Girls' presents a particularly interesting case. In 2013-14, the school had three sections of Class XI Commerce and two of Arts/Humanities, each section with around 25 students equaling a total of around 75 Commerce students and 50 in the Arts/Humanities. Contrastingly, there was only one section of Class XI Science with a mere eight students and only 12 students in Class XII. Students often pointed to Delhi Public School (DPS) RK Puram as a rare Public School that "specializes" in Science. One Mayoite estimated that the school had so many Science students that it required well over 30 sections – "They have over 1,000 students in countless science sections, XI Science A down to like XI Science Z!" Mayoites frequently stated that this was because Mayo was "known" for its Arts stream, not only academically but in terms of its co-curriculars, while Science offerings were regularly thought sub-par.

"Mayo is rubbish in Science," said Saundarya, a Class IX student. We were standing on the second floor balcony of the main school building with a group of 10th Standard students. "It's really known for its Arts. It's really strong here. Science scores have been pretty low. My elder

[78] *E.g.* in 2013-14, Welham had an even number of Class XI Science and Arts students with one section of 20 students each and *two* Commerce sections with 20 students each.

sister [cousin] went to Mayo up to 10th and left for Kota afterward for coaching. I'm planning on doing the same thing, you know? Living at a PG [paying guest house] and going to Resonance or something. The entrance exam is around April."

"Oh, there's an entrance exam for Resonance?" I asked. It was the first I had heard about coaching centers having their own entrance exams. "Are there higher or lower classes or something?"

"Yes, depending on your entrance exam score. But when they found out my sister was from Mayo they automatically put her in the top class. The Mayo name goes a long way."

Three of the other six students standing in our circle said they too were planning on leaving after 10th as they wanted to pursue Science, two of which said they were going to Kota, one trying to get into Allen which now has its own hostel while the other wasn't sure yet which institute to attend. A few stated that they were currently attending tuitions meant to help prepare them for these other coaching centers' entrance exams (*i.e.* in order to gain admissions generally, earn placement in a certain advanced level section as with Saundarya, and/or gain a fees reduction or percentage scholarship) – coaching to gain access to coaching.

"Mayo is great for an all-round education with lots of activities," said the aspiring Allen-ite, "but Science students just really need to focus on their studies."

Saundarya added, "Yea, I mean, it's not that Mayo has so few girls interested in Science but the majority leave for coaching after 10th. I'd guess around 80%."

This being the case, though private coaching is often labelled as "shadow education," thought to change and adapt to the formal system while mostly remaining a separate and/or supplementary entity, for most students trying to pursue particular Streams as related to future course or career goals and for Public Schools trying to retain and attract students by providing

the preparation thought necessary for success on current evaluations of "merit," they are a far cry from either.

Private Tuitions:
The Troubles with Separate & Supplementary

Firstly, the "separate" matter. The desire to attend private coaching among students and their parents has placed enormous pressure on Public Schools to make adjustments and allowances to their boarding models in order to retain students and keep applications and enrollments high if not consistent. At MGD, a boarding-cum-day school, for instance, the principal noted how the number of day-scholar applicants as well as boarding students *transferring* to day-scholar status in order to pursue coaching, especially in Board exam years, continues to increase. In their recent attempts to keep boarders since 2012, MGD has allowed certain students with written permission from their parents and pre-arranged transportation to travel off campus into the city for coaching. At completely residential schools like Mayo and Welham Girls', such allowances must be made in order to keep students from transferring schools. An SKV administrator noted that one of the first questions parents ask when considering sending their daughter(s) to the school is whether coaching is provided on campus or if students are allowed to go off campus for such services.

"Even when parents are assured that our teachers provide evening tutoring to students in their Houses, many parents are not interested, and turn to schools like Woodstock [a nearby boarding-cum-day school in Dehradun] instead so they can attend coaching."

To meet this demand, then, all four schools have struck up different types of partnerships and contracts with external tutoring companies to come on campus, essentially outsourcing fee-

based coaching before and after school for senior students for certain popular exams and subjects (*e.g.* SAT and CLAT/Law, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Commerce-based Math). Mayo Girls' holds specific coaching on-campus over school breaks in the winter and summer as well as remedial courses for those students identified as in-need during activities/games time throughout the year. Still, these attempts at keeping students on campus for coaching are not always successful. Take, for example, one case at MGD. Though the school has provided evening tutoring on-campus for the past few years for 11th and 12th Standard boarders in subjects like Accounting, they wanted to encourage more students to stay on campus by introducing diverse coaching partnerships directly afterschool. However, after setting up such a program with a local architectural design center that students were already attending off-campus for NID/NIFT exam prep, no one signed up. The reasons why? Many students stated that they preferred getting off campus not only for a change in scenery but for a chance to socialize with students from other schools, including boys, and for exposure to male instructors, often not allowed on all-girls' campuses as subject teachers or tutors. SKV previously employed several male tutors through an outsourced coaching partnership on-campus but parents voiced concerns over the inappropriate optics of the arrangement and after only a few weeks, administrators were compelled to discontinue their contract, opting for women-only instructors. Though, as the principal admitted to me, female instructors are often difficult to find in certain subject areas like science and math.

"In a school like ours, in SKV, I was perhaps the first principal who thought there should be a coaching class here because you cannot just *wish* it away. It's *there*. It's like the elephant you don't see in the room. So to recognize the demand of the students and the parents was the obvious thing to do and that is what we did."

Addressing such levels of infiltration at a morning assembly in early October, MGD's principal noted how instead of sending their parents to the school's parent-teacher meetings (PTMs), some students had started sending their coaching instructors.

"This is *not* allowed. It is unacceptable," she said with noticeable frustration. "You can tell these coaching instructors that they can keep their presence *outside* the classroom!"

In all of this is an understanding by administrators that private coaching is not something Public Schools can't just separate themselves from or ignore, but instead, something they must mediate.

Secondly, for many students coaching and tuitions are not always "supplementary" but seen as equally important if not primary to their education, leading them to drop out of prestigious Public Schools for intensive exam prep or skip school and bunk classes for days, weeks, or months at a time to prioritize coaching. Places like Jaipur have centers spread across the city with certain neighborhoods serving as coaching hubs or corridors. Walking down the street in areas such as Raja Park, Lal Kothi, or Malvinagar, for instance, you encounter countless advertisements and signs for coaching institutes in English and Hindi, with centers oftentimes stacked on top of each other in low-rise buildings, supported by neighboring coffee shops, stalls selling ice cream and crisps, or street vendors selling various *chaats* [savory snacks] such as *gol guppe*, *bhel puri*, *poha, chaach*, and *lassi*, all popular co-ed hang-outs for students. Some of these centers are singular providers while others have multiple locations in the city or operate as (inter)national mass coaching companies such as the Princeton Review or those that specialize in India's engineering and medical exams such as Resonance, Bansal, Allen Career Institute, Aakash Institute, FIITJEE, Vibrant Academy, and Pace. While many of these specific companies, popularly considered the country's top coaching institutes, have local branches in

various cities like Jaipur, Dehradun, Gwalior, and Ajmer, they mainly work out of the coaching capital of Kota, Rajasthan, located about 240 km south of Jaipur. For those students who drop out of all-girls' Public Schools completely, like those 9th Standard Science-hopefuls on Mayo Girls' balcony that one afternoon, Kota is often where they go.

When J.K. Synthetics, a large industrial unit closed its doors in the early 1990s, a former engineer of the company, V.K. Bansal, took up teaching, setting up Bansal Classes to coach students for entrance tests to engineering colleges including the country's famous IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology) (Ghosh 2012). Kota quickly became a nucleus for students seeking a ticket to these top colleges in an environment where every year more than 450,000 students take the IIT exam and only 3% are successful (*ibid.*). Kota's economy is now largely based on its coaching industry with income generated by the coaching institutes themselves as well as by supporting industries such as school supplies stores, coffee shops, internet cafes, hostels and paying guest houses (PGs), canteens, tiffin centers, and bike shops. In 2012-13, an estimated 110,000 students came to Kota, 75% of which were from outside the state of Rajasthan (*ibid.*).[79] Being that these coaching centers entail day-long classes followed by heavy loads of homework, many have their own hostels, dining facilities, cyber cafes, and even private hospitals on their sometimes sprawling campuses fit with air-conditioned classrooms. In order to meet the CBSE's requirement that all students are enrolled in a "registered" school where they achieve at least 75% attendance, students regularly enroll in what are called "dummy schools," local private schools that they do not actually attend except to show up for exams. These schools work in partnership with coaching centers to fudge attendance records for the sake of gaining fees from

[79] In 2012, Forbes estimated that three companies alone accounted for more than 50,000 of these students – Bansal (Kota) had 17,000 students; Vibrant Academy (Kota) 9,200 students; and Allen (Kota) 30,000 students (*ibid.*). A few years back, Etoos Academy, backed by the $104 billion SK Group (among South Korea's top four conglomerates) and one of South Korea's leading coaching institutes, also set up shop in Kota (*ibid.*).

students who they are then not responsible for teaching. To try and stymie these occurrences, the CBSE stated that it planned on "cracking down" on dummy schools through surprise inspections; and in May 2013, in attempts to squash the coaching industry and its focus on entrance exams, the CBSE gave 40% weightage to Class XII Board marks on IIT and JEE exams. Still, far from reducing the need for coaching, the policy opened up new streams for *subject-based* coaching in things like Psychology, Sociology, and English.

At all four Public Schools, I encountered girls who had either returned to Public School life after a failed coaching-dummy school experience or were weighing their options to leave their Public School after 10th Standard for full-time coaching in Kota or similar locations. Students who returned to schools like MGD or Mayo Girls' after full-time coaching often cited similar reasons – it was too much pressure and stress, students studied all the time with endless classes and homework, conditions were not great in the hostels or PGs, they fell ill or into bad habits, or they missed their friends and social life.

Sitting outside on one of the benches near MGD's taekwondo field one day, I asked Saumya how she came to MGD in 11th Standard.

"Well, it's a *long*, complicated story," she admitted with a slight chuckle. "I was going to Dehradun [for school] but then I decided to come to Kota for this IIT. Do you know about Kota? It's famous for IIT, JEE, medical coachings, *thik hei* [OK, yes]? So I went to Kota but there I fell sick. I had a kind of jaundice, typhoid and all. So, I stayed there for like a month, a month and a half, and then I came back home to Nepal. My parents decided they weren't going to send me back to Kota because I had this very hectic kind of schedule. It's like studying the whole day long, no TV, *nothing*. Only a tough student who's very ambitious, you know, who just wants to clear the IIT and stuff, only that kind of person could ever survive there."

During this time, Saumya stayed at a PG and enrolled in a local private school as her dummy school. She also stated that it was difficult to make friends since, as she put it, all anyone cared about what studying. With that said, decisions to leave residential Public Schools were not always so Kota-centric. Ritwika, a Class XI Science student at Mayo Girls' represented this path.

"I'm originally from Gujarat and at one point I decided to leave Mayo to go back to my home state to go to a co-ed day school and coaching. It was like a dummy-school situation, but it didn't really work out. It was too much pressure at the day school. Exams were every other week and then going to coaching for hours afterwards. It was too much so I came back."

Stories of pressure, stress, workload, and time suck as well as narratives detailing who goes to places like Kota or who can "make it" in coaching were common. These stories extended from students and their parents to teachers and administrators and usually emerged through a series of overlapping popular narratives – (a) those who go in order to fully concentrate on their work and are skilled and resilient enough to succeed; (b) those who are feeling some sort of pressure to go but either due to lack of natural skill or resiliency may fail; and (c) those who go for purposes of independence and/or socialization. Bhumika, a 10th Standard boarder, stated that a large portion of her class was planning on leaving MGD for coaching.

"I think like 19 in my class are planning on leaving MGD and probably 90% of those are for coaching, Kota, you know? There are two types that go to Kota – you're either really intelligent or you just want to socialize."

In the latter case, I regularly heard talk about the immorality of Kota, especially for girls, where unmonitored youth often lived in co-ed hostels and PGs and frequently became involved in things like alcohol, drugs, and pre-marital sex either due to peer pressure or in order to deal with the stress of day-long tuitions and living alone. At Welham Girls', one administrator noted

that six out of their 70 students currently in Class X were planning on leaving, two for an IB-Board school in order to try and gain admissions to an Ivy League university in the U.S. and four for "hard-core" coaching.

"Two of these girls I really feel sorry for. I think they're being pressured from their parents even though we've advised them that we don't think these girls really have a natural aptitude for Science. The other two, I think they'll make it." She stated that if administrators or teachers think parents are wrongly pressuring students into a subject, Stream, or coaching, they try and counsel them out of the decision. "We actually call them and talk to them a lot. I mail them; I call them; I talk to them, all the teachers talk to them, and we try and persuade them, telling them that in *this* area we actually might know your daughter better in terms of her aptitude. If we can't convince them, we can't. But we make a jolly good effort and tell the student just to put her best into it as you never know what may work out."

An SKV administrator stated that most students there, if they are going to leave, leave after 10th Standard for another Board, a day-school-coaching combo, or full-time coaching, estimating that in a regular class of 80 in 10th Standard around 20 will leave. She too discussed how they spent a great deal of time counseling students and their parents about leaving, particularly about whether they think a student needs or will be successful in such coaching environments or concentrations. Whether or not such counsel is heeded is another story.

Then there were a few students who said they were considering moving to Delhi after 10th Standard to enroll in dummy schools and attend coaching to qualify for Delhi University's in-state admissions and fees advantage. The university reserves a quota of seats for in-state students and offers tuition cuts for students who attend 11th and 12th Standard in the city.

Finally, there are those who do not completely drop out of their residential Public Schools but balance some combination of attending coaching offered on campus, attending intensive coaching over school holidays and breaks, and leaving school after October's Diwali break or in December to attend full-time coaching until Board exams begin in early February, having already achieved 75% attendance for the academic year. While boarders at MGD frequently transfer to day-scholar status a few months before their Board exams or attend coaching on the weekend or over holiday breaks, day-scholars generally practice various compensatory methods such as skipping school for morning tuitions, bunking class to work on tuitions' homework around campus, or leaving directly afterschool to attend hours of coaching at nearby institutes. This not only creates an immense amount of pressure on teachers and students to finish their Class XII syllabi before October (a syllabus meant to span the entire academic year from April to February) but rather transient feeling day-scholar and Senior class "communities." One MGD administrator estimated that about 50% of boarders do not return after winter break, not even to take their "Pre-Board" exams in January, stating that she receives requests from parents to transfer their boarders to day-scholar status citing all kinds of excuses as early as December.

It was actually in mid-December that I was intercepted by one of MGD's House captains on my way to a classroom observation. Shruti was petite and wore a pretty awesome set of architectural, wire-framed specs. In her greetings you could always expect a wry smile to materialize across her face as she pronounced my name in an elongated fashion, inserting a "y" somewhere in the middle.

"Hey, Mey-ghan," she said laughingly, "or…I guess I should be saying goodbye."

I must have looked confused because she then added,

"I'm leaving boarding in a few weeks, becoming a day-scholar so I can take tuitions, math coaching in Lol Kothi…only for 15 days though, over winter break."

"Oh? Interesting…I thought you were kind of anti-coaching, didn't think it helped," I said in response. She had expressed this opinion on multiple occasions throughout the year.

"Well…the CBSE curriculum doesn't provide the level of specialization, in-depth, needed. Though, I don't really think those who go to tuitions *necessarily* do better than those who just go to class. Those who go to both *maybe* do better, but more often if students go to coaching they're not going to school classes. In that case, the ones who go to classes and self-study do better than those who just do coaching."

"I see. Then why go?" I pressed.

"It's a compulsion," she said shrugging her shoulders. "I don't really favor tuitions…. I'm so confused," she said in a turn of mild despondency. "What to do? But I have to finish the syllabus. I've missed so many chapters due to my duties as leader."

Though elective subjects, co-curriculars, and other leadership responsibilities are often identified as Public School boons, building up students' portfolios, (inter)personal skill sets, and exposure, Shruti notes that they can also serve as venues of distraction for students and teachers, increasing stress and workloads, altering studying and teaching habits, affecting concentration and motivation, and ultimately leading many students to opt-out of classes or school for coaching where they feel they can "catch up" or better "focus."

"Whole-Person" Education: Marks Driven & Crunched for Time

No longer solely institutional or IPSC-based, co-curriculars such as athletics, clubs, service projects, and the arts are now also offered through external organizational affiliates and

implemented as requirements under certain Boards of Education. Recall how Anjali put it when describing her Sociology project – "ICSE is only all about studying. My old school was a CBSE school so there were more opportunities for co-curriculars and upgradations. ICSE is too much and all theoretical. CBSE is more practical, I think." These characterizations are, in part, a result of a number of changes made to the CBSE over the past decade or so to reroute student and school attention away from Board examinations and obsessions over marks to approaches aimed at all-round development. This included the introduction of new subjects, a relative reduction of subject matter depth, and the Class X Board becoming optional in addition to a new focus on co-scholastics, projects, and shorter, more periodic evaluations throughout the year in Classes VI through X. All of this came under a new scheme introduced as a part of the Right to Education Act in 2009-10 called, "Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation," or "CCE" more commonly. Nevertheless the success and efficacy of these curricular and pedagogical guides, the differences between the CBSE and ICSE in students' approach to and experiences of "whole person" education, are at times made moot by an Indian and global education network largely motivated by and rewarding of marks.

Sitting to one side of Mayo Girls' open-air performing arts building overlooking the campus's Saraswati temple one evening, the sound of its bell bouncing off the nearby hills, I asked Latika, a 10th Standard student from Rajasthan, how she thought the ISCE curriculum compared to that of the CBSE in this regard.

"It's thought to be more difficult because CBSE is just an overview, it's more general, whereas [in] ICSE they tell you *why* it's happening…and how is it happening. So if you're talking to somebody about how does a seed germinate, I can talk about it. Maybe someone else would just say, 'Yea you plant it and something comes out.' It's like that. That's what I think. If

I want to know something, I want to know all about it…. CBSE is cutting down its course every year. [In the ICSE] we may [only] cut out a few chapters…we might cut out 5 headings in one chapter. That's it. I mean, sometimes it can be frustrating. Like, what am I going to use all this for? Why do I need to know each and every detail? There's that added pressure to know *everything*. So on one side, we become more knowledgeable, perhaps, than others…but on the other, then maybe it becomes less the 'how' or 'why' but the 'what' again…for marks, since that's still a main motivation, and students end up copying or mugging up to get through it all."

"So what do you think of this CCE curriculum in CBSE schools?" I asked.

"I think that's nice. I imagine it's more motivating. But see…why would you *want* to score that 9.5? Why would you want all these co-curricular activities and all that…that 'all-roundership?'" she said somewhat mockingly, using her hand to draw air-quotes. "No, in the end, the aim is the same…marks. 'See, *beta* [child], you have to get a good grade,'" she added mimicking her father's voice and pointing her finger knowingly. "The aim is the same. In India, the 'how' is not considered. It's the 'what.' It's again a parody."

Latika points out that almost regardless of Board approach, regardless of acknowledged differences, students (and their families) are still motivated by marks, thus undermining Board and school attempts at focusing mainly on cultivating "all-roundership." So while the ICSE strives for theoretical consideration and depth, students employ certain tactics to work with and around expectations to achieve high marks; and while CCE aims to move focus away from the "what" (*i.e.* marks) through more projects, co-curriculars, and smaller (read: less stressful) exams, there are those who argue that it is the precise formalization of these things, *i.e.* directly *relating* them to marks, that is responsible for simultaneously *increasing* and *decreasing* student and teacher stress as well as motivations; the importance of and preparedness for each

intermittent exam and the Class X Board; teacher subjectivity in assigning marks and the relevancy of assignment feedback; and the incidence of rote memorization, copying, and begging for marks – "It's again a parody."

Through CCE, students participate in four "formative assessments" (FAs), worth in-total 40% of their "cumulative grade point average" (CGPA), and two "summative assessments" (SAs), worth 60% of their CGPA during the year. FAs are supposed to be comprised of student work from class and "home," including performances on oral tests, quizzes, projects, and assignments, while each SA entails a three-hour long written test prepared by the schools themselves, though partially monitored by the CBSE. These marks are then weighted and scored on a 0 to 10-point scale, with number ranges coordinating with certain letter grades (*e.g.* a CGPA between 9.1-10.0 is an "A1," between 8.1-9.0 an "A2," 7.1-8.0 a "B1," and so forth down to 0.0-2.0 as an "E2"). Even as this move was intended to place more emphasis on project-learning and co-curriculars, the increased frequency and types of graded assignments left little time for exercises to be meaningful in any way.

"There are so many exams," said Aashna, a Class X student at SKV while we ate lunch together in the dining hall. "You take the PSA [Problem Solving Assessment] in Class IX and if you don't get a good score you can take it again in Class X and your best score is kept. We have TPs, Timed Papers, every Tuesday on a specific subject, four FAs [Formal Assessments] and two SAs [Summative Assessments], two Unit Tests…and each FA has a project and a written section with Hindi and English having verbal. I've never even received feedback from FAs or projects, only marks, as they're sent out to the CBSE. CCE is too much. There are too many things to do for one day."

On the one hand, then, CCE creates a somewhat relentless pressure to do well on everything, as everything influences your marks. Walking passed the basketball courts toward the main school building at MGD one afternoon, I ran into a fraught-looking 10th Standard student, Bhavika, heading in the opposite direction toward the stadium, who echoed Aashna.

"Hey, what's going on?" I asked after her, "Where are you off to? Why the face?"

Bhavika turned in a somewhat frantic haze, "Huh? What? Oh man, I can't right now…so languished [sic]. I don't want to do it anymore. I can feel it on my bones, you know?

Laughing at the dramatics, I responded, "No. What? What's wrong?"

"Everyone has such high expectations for me. When is it going to *count* for something? Never! In school, in life, in," Bhavika pointed rather theatrically to the sky, "his grand plan? When, man? This is not a school, it's a circus! I just got my SA math score and I guess, you know, it wasn't the best…I failed by 5 points. And Ms. Ramaswamy was giving me this big speech about how she expects more. I don't know. It's exhausting, you know? I don't just want to pass, I want to get a high score…but, why such high expectations? Who can take it? I mean, how can I study for this test when I have to study for the next test, and do this and that project, go to cricket, and then go to this dance practice with this choreographer, and then go to this and that club? It's not like those don't matter either. Marks, man!"

There were then those who believed, thanks to the Board's changes to the curricula, that standards and expectations on students had become *too low*. This came up a great deal whenever discussions over the matter of "upgradation" or "upscaling" arose, what Anjali argued made the CBSE comparably "easy." According to CCE, Class X students can "upgrade" one or two of their main subject scholastic grades to the next higher grade (*e.g.* a B1 would "upgrade" to an A2) if they earned high marks in their co-scholastics that year. These "co-scholastics" include

such things as “life skills” (divided up into “thinking,” “social,” and “emotional skills”); work education; visual or performing arts; “attitudes and values” (divided into categories including “towards teachers,” “schoolmates,” “school programs,” “the environment,” and “value system”); co-curriculars (*e.g.* clubs); and health and physical education. The move to connect these activities to marks in competitive schooling environments, though, has perhaps undermined their initial purpose. Vriddhi, a Class XI student at SKV, explained this experience to me one day.

“CCE doesn’t make you an all-rounder. These projects are meaningless. Girls just copy them from each other. In my last school, I got an 8.6 and an A1 and a boy in my class got a 9.4 and an A1. He was so angry that because of up-gradation I got the same score. It’s really lowering the expectations placed on students. The optional 10th Board, you can take the CBSE or school board option, then [results in] students not feeling prepared for Class XII Boards because they didn’t take the Class X ones seriously. It was all made easier because so many students were committing suicide from stress of exams or the reservation system.”

Ms. Rathore, a teacher at MGD, expressed how such experiences were also not a one-sided affair, students versus teachers. She, like others, lamented how all the exams, projects, clubs, and activities prescribed by the CBSE left no time for learning, much less a theoretical understanding of the material, what she called “bookish,” or grading, resulting in students having a biased understanding of their levels of understanding and the marks deserved for such work.

“Academics right now are impossible as there is no time. It shouldn’t be an expectation that every student participate in every event and activity. Teachers are set-up to fail and with the CBSE making all these demands – exams, recordings, re-recordings – it really is a thankless job. In terms of academics, things used to be more text-focused, bookish, now there’s no time for children to learn theory, to actually *understand* a topic past the basics. There’s no time. So they

end up knowing nothing. They'll read an entire passage, but nothing will sink in. Yet, if you ask them, they'll say that they got it. They don't even *realize* that they're not learning. And there's no way to verify. At the end of the semester, they come running to you with their sheets, asking you, "Ma'am, sign-off please, *na*?" verifying that they participated in this or that club or activity. They now come begging for marks."

Teachers like Ms. Rathore and several students additionally voiced that the "continuous" examination model with its weekly tests, though successful in decreasing some of the pressures experienced with each individual exam, reduced student incentives to study for these specific, school-based assessments as many didn't really see the point. In one such instance at MGD, while handing out graded quizzes from the previous week, a Class XII Sociology teacher asked whether anyone in the class had actually studied as their marks were altogether rather low. Over the low laughter and smirks rising throughout the classroom, one student offered,

"There is no pressure to study, ma'am."

Seated to my right, Padmanjali looked relieved and quite proud as she showed me her 12/25 score. "Pretty good, right?" she asked, "I didn't even study or read the book, only listened in class. I had another exam to study for at tuitions so I was balancing."

In this moment, Padmanjali raises the catch-22 of tuitions – while they support those who fall behind in their syllabi because they or their teachers miss class due to co-curriculars or other responsibilities, they also operate as yet another thing to do on an already packed daily schedule.

In a student survey conducted at Welham Girls', 44.6% of 11th and 12th Standard students (n=100) stated that their teachers missed 1-3 classes a week, 21.3% stated their teachers missed 4-5 classes, 14.9% stated that they missed 6-7 classes, and 14.9% stated that their teachers missed none. In the same survey, 63.8% of students stated that they themselves missed no classes

per week, while 21.3% stated that they missed 1-3 classes, and 10.6% missed 4-5 per week, all mostly for competitions or practice. In comparison, in the same student survey conducted at MGD (a day-cum-boarding school), 64.3% of senior students (n=100) reported their teachers missing 4-5 classes a week, 23.1% stated that they missed 1-3, and 7.6% reported teachers missing none. The numbers for students missing class were comparable to the data given for teachers. Not only does this suggest that the time constraints are expectedly tighter at a day-cum-boarding school, but that they are even experienced in completely boarding situations as well.

To this point, during one particularly busy month when teachers and students were preparing for MGD's Annual Day in addition to the IPSC Cultural and Literature Festival, I heard a number of students complain about how they hadn't had "normal" classes in weeks (others, of course, were glad). Padmanjali told me that it was a shame because she really liked her one teacher's expertise and style of teaching but she was so busy advising activities that she was rarely in class. A few weeks later, she came skipping toward me with utter joy on her face, announcing, "We had class today! Class! We *learned*!" I also encountered students who skipped class because their teachers were so far behind (as compared to their coaching classes) or, the opposite, complained that they were rushing through the material too quickly. In these cases, students often stated that their teachers rationalized such pacing through (un)stated assumptions that students were learning the material in their coaching centers anyway.

In mid-November, on my way from the House of Science to MGD's library, I came across a 12th Science day-scholar studying her Biology book alone by the canteens during class. Sitting down next to Anubhuti on the canteen stoop, I teasingly asked why she was bunking.

"I'm trying to finish the course," she offered, a practice that basically amounted to reading the entire textbook and marking it up.

"Oh, you haven't done that in class yet?" I asked.

"We did in coaching but in class not yet. My teacher's really busy. She's in charge of the AstroFest now so she's not here. We have so many free periods that we have to study on our own, but…it's hard to stay motivated."

"Oh, where do you go for coaching?"

"I go to Resonance on Tonk Road from 4:00 to 8:20, 4-days a week. I'm thinking of quitting though because there's no time to study on my own."

"But isn't there school?" I asked.

She laughed, saying rather dismissively, "I don't know what happens at school."

In noting the usefulness of coaching for keeping busy students up to speed, Anubhati again brings up this paradox where tuitions can actually *add* to the time crunch students experience as well as undermine their abilities to self-study.[80] Rattling around one evening in the back of an auto-rickshaw from architecture and design tuitions with Chetna, an MGDian and daughter of one of the school's teachers, she too addressed this dilemma. Wanting to go abroad for college, she felt the need to take up SAT prep with the Princeton Review but complained that there just were not enough hours in the day.

"It's the best in Jaipur, after all. But I don't know when to fit it in. I have Maths [sic] tuitions Thursday and Saturday and then architecture Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, and then school work. How can I go?"

However, even when schools are closed, tuitions centers are generally open. Sitting in a Math coaching center with a few MGDians on a Saturday in early October, a student asked whether the institute was closed the next day for Gandhi Jayanti.

[80] The 2012 Asian Development Bank (ADB) report stated as many as 83% of India's high school children juggle time around school, extra-curricular activities, and tuitions at these coaching centers

"No, of course not," Sir replied. "Are we a school?" he added, sarcastically.

The students pressed, stating that businesses were supposed to be closed.

"We'll just have one class tomorrow then," the instructor negotiated.

Beyond this, for those students who do not have time to attend coaching during the school year, perhaps because they are unwilling to combine it with their boarding school experiences, or feel generally unprepared to take a given entrance exam, gap years have become an option wherein students attend full-time coaching after graduating from secondary school and before applying to college.

Many of these narratives revolve around students feeling as though they don't have enough time to self-study or doubt that they can, at least in the "right way." As put by one Head Girl/School Captain, coaching has redefined how students feel they are *supposed* to study.

"I think there are just some people who lack confidence, it's true. But I also think that the presence of coaching centers *breed* self-doubt so people come to their institutes. They have been defined as the right way to do things…which is a problem. Self-study is not the 'wrong' way, but they've put students off self-study because they tell them that it's not the 'right' way. This is the way you should do it. You should solve question papers from earlier years and you should look at outside textbooks and guidebooks, you know? Whereas someone else would be equally capable of passing an exam if they're not doing that…if they're reading up on something or if they're just doing it their own way. So I don't think, in that sense, it's not so much that coaching centers have hampered our ability to self-study but they have now defined how you *should* do it."

The pressures of co-curriculars, primacy of marks, and felt-necessity of tuitions have therefore undercut many Public School efforts toward "whole person" education, in many ways

causing students to prioritize rote-memorization, cramming, copying, and the language of the text over their own. Still, far from not realizing they're not learning, as was suggested by Ms. Rathore, engagement with such methods were *consciously* utilitarian on the part of most students, coping to achieve in situations of high-pressure, constrained time, and competitive outcomes.

The Utility of Learning with(out) Understanding: Copying, Mugging Up, and *Raṭification*

In early October, I came across Jyestha sitting alone on a stoop behind the school's main building, the 12th-ies' and captains' *adda* [hang-out] at MGD. Two large textbooks teetered on her lap. Every now and then one book or the other would slip off her white pajama pants as she shifted, referring to one before writing in the other, causing her to suddenly slap it against her leg to stop it from falling.

"What are you up to? Why aren't you in class?" I chuckled after one such episode, walking up the few steps to sit next to her.

Looking a bit startled, Jyestha looked up, "What? Oh…just copying some notes I missed in Business Studies…captain's duties, right? They're just revising in class, so I thought to skip and catch up…I haven't finished the syllabus yet."

I looked over her shoulder to find almost every sentence underlined in the book with circled numbers or indicators such as "imp." written next to particular sentences or paragraphs. "Don't you think it would make more sense to actually read the text yourself and underline what *you* think is important?"

Smiling a little at the seeming absurdity of my question, she responded, speaking slowly to emphasize her answer's obviousness, "No…my opinion of what is important doesn't matter. The teacher tells us what to underline and memorize because that's how we have to answer it on the exams. The exam in Business Studies *is* the book."

Figure 35 MGDian copying the underlined and numbered sections from a classmate's Business Studies textbook

Jyestha noted that the numbers were a breakdown of the possible points each aspect could afford you if included in an answer on a related Board exam question. In this sense, concerns over marks placed primacy away from long-term, higher-order engagement and more toward learned processes fit for achieving more immediate outcomes, skills in and of themselves.

Similar scenes appeared at all four schools. In English Literature classes at Mayo Girls', students would pull out combinations of different colored pens, pencils, highlighters, and sticky notes to prep themselves for the start of the lesson. Whether going through Robert Frost's "Mending Wall," Lord Byron's "Waterloo," or a Shakespearian play, the teachers would often

ask for a volunteer to read a passage, ask the girls their interpretations, and then dictate transliterations that the students would frantically copy down while a few interjected, "Please repeat, ma'am!" or, "Ma'am, slow down." Students squeezed these translations into the spaces between the text's print while some wrote explanations in the pages' margins or on attached sticky notes. This resulted in the original text becoming essentially unreadable. But it wasn't until after a particularly thoughtful explanation given by Parul, a student sitting to my left, culminated in her feverishly writing down the teacher's dictation that I whispered with interest,

"Why are you doing that? It sounds like you have the gist of the story pretty well."

Without looking up from her book as she worked to keep pace she responded, "You could be saying the right answer in your own words, but it will be marked wrong on the test because you didn't say it in the *right* words."

"So…is it more about memorization or understanding?" I asked.

"Memorization, obviously…if you want the points," she said while shuffling through her stuffed lion-shaped pen case, settling on an orange one.

The student on my other side, Drishti, had run out of space and was placing sticky notes in a line down her page. "So, do you actually go back and read all that you're writing? It's covering up the actual print," I asked.

"Of course. Discussions in class help...but you need to know how to say it in the exact words. I didn't used to give thought to such things. I was doing a kind of *raṭification*…learning something but you're not getting the meaning."

I had heard the Hindi-English amalgamation used by students before. It came from the word *raṭna*, a noun meaning "rote memorization" or verb translated variously as "to cram," "to mug up," "to parrot," "to sap," etc. Jyestha, Parul, and Drishti exemplify how the primacy of the

exam can cause students to shirk deeper understanding for *raṭification* or to engage in the double-task of understanding and then having to memorize their answers in a language or style legitimized by the text (and, therefore, their Board of Education and NCERT, The National Council of Educational Research and Training).

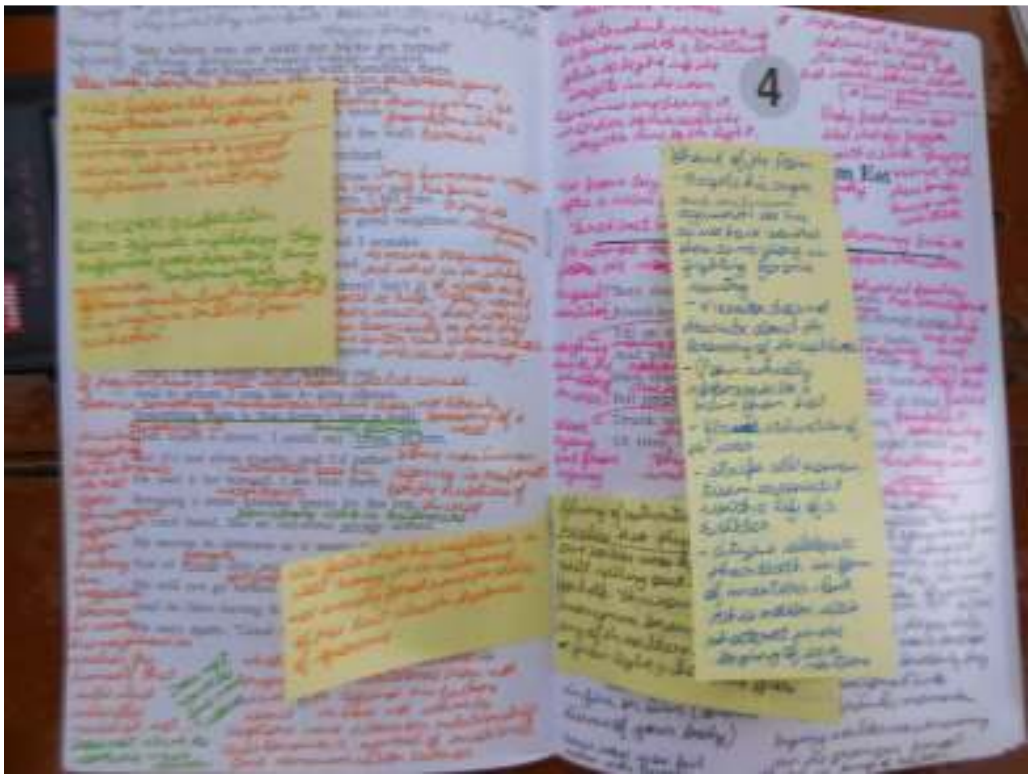

Figure 36 Welhamite's notes on and transliterations of Robert Frost's "Mending Wall"

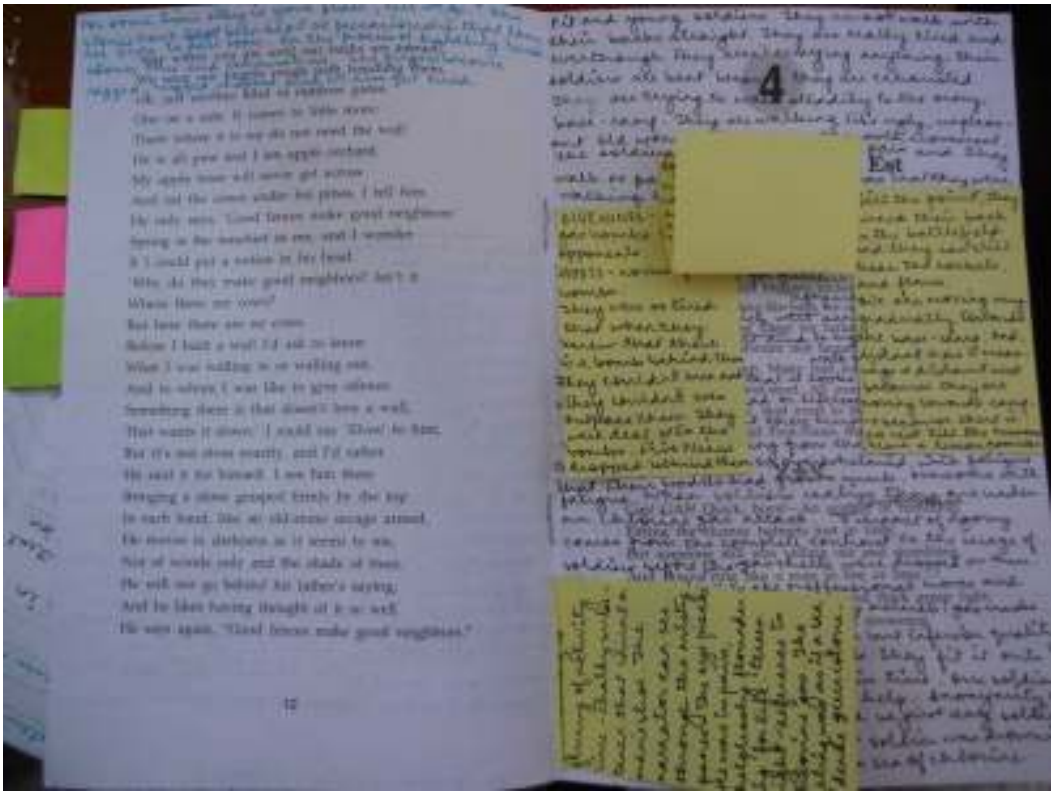

Figure 37 Another student notes on and transliterations of Robert Frost's “Mending Wall”

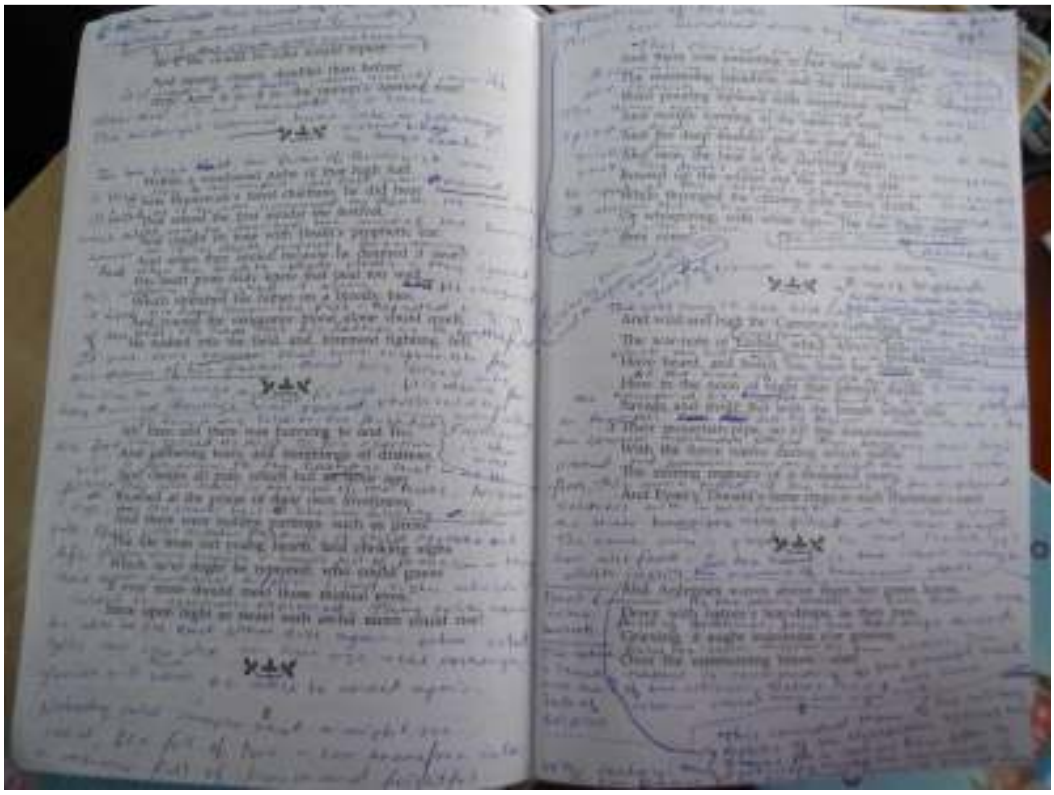

Figure 38 Student notes on and transliterations of Lord Byron’s “Waterloo”

The claim that rote-memorization and "copy-paste" is in essence "Indian culture" is worthy of some historical or contextual consideration in order to better understand why students like Anjali and many adult-others frequently employed these explanations. There are those who posit such "instrumentalism" or "learning without understanding" emerged with British colonialism, whose approaches to educating the "natives" gradually delegitimized the *gurukula* (a Hindu tradition dating back to the Vedas in which a *guru* [master] and his *kul* [extended family] or set of students [*shishya*] learned, lived, and worked together for "free") and other indigenous systems of education, placing primacy on English as the medium of instruction, formalizing textbooks, curricula, and assessments, and instituting connections between high-stakes examinations and obtaining a salaried, high-status position within the imperial government. It was really no wonder that soon after Macaulay's education reforms, the British began to complain that their Indian pupils only saw "Western" education as a means to an end (*i.e.* for higher income, dowries, and/or access to jobs), seldom valued in and of itself, claiming students only utilized rote memorization and "cram methodologies," likened to "copying machines" (Seth 2007). However, not only did students see the utility of these methods but others argue that many, lacking the needed skills in English, could not but memorize the text if they wanted to succeed in colonial evaluations of competence. Today, the authority of textbooks, the impacts of language medium, and the high-stakes nature of exam scores have arguably resulted in a continuation of similar approaches to studying through utilitarian memorization or, at times, "learning without understanding." In several teachers' workshops that I observed throughout the year at MGD, teachers regularly raised grievances over "new" Board requirements and the impacts of examinations by invoking a lost "Golden Age" of education that

they located in the *gurukula*. However, one could argue that such "native" "sage-on-the-stage" models of education are also largely rooted in memorization.[81]

And though Public Schools no doubt aim to engage their students in an appreciation of learning for learning's sake, these schools and their students are still expected to deliver high marks on exams and gain admission to high-ranking colleges and courses. This focus on the protocols of immediate success, therefore, has led many like Anjali to hyperbolically create diagrams explaining their experiences of the Indian education system as, "Mug → Write → Score → Get a degree → Earn → Spend → Die!"

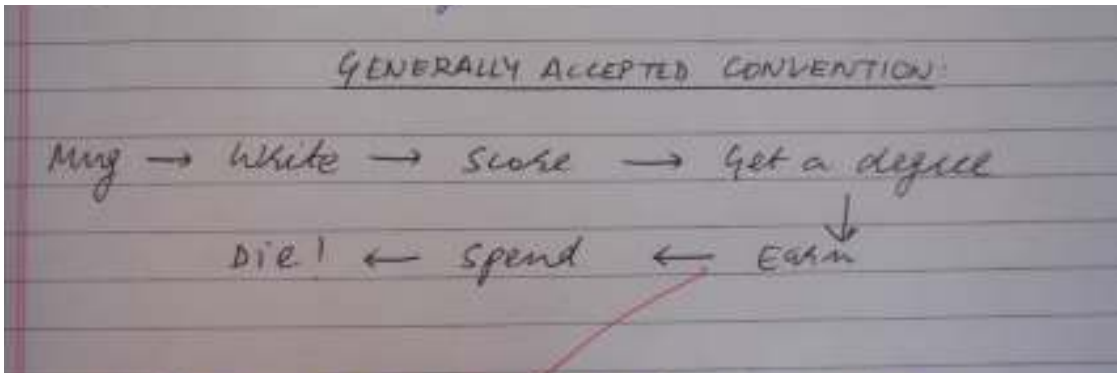

Figure 39 Project's "Generally Accepted Convention"

Raṭification, copying, mugging up, or rote-memorization are connected in the sense that it is not so much what you say but *how* you say it that counts. While English comprehension in some cases still contributes, at these schools it is more about saying things in the "right way," *i.e.* the way that earns full academic marks than anything. Recall, Jyestha's rationalization for copying her classmates' underlines, "My opinion of what is important doesn't matter…The exam

[81] Amartya Sen's (2005: xi) work on the "argumentative Indian," further posits that many of these epic texts used to educate (especially under the *gurukul* system) were not only committed to memory for their religious purposes but were used to "tell stories, speculate about the world and…ask difficult questions." It is conceivable, therefore, that the teachers' longing for this "Golden Age" of Indian education is more a calling for a time where memorization was employed as a means of achieving foundational knowledge (in a time when texts, translations, and the ability to read were lacking) in order to then engage in higher-order discourses, not just memorization for memorization's sake.

in Business Studies *is* the book," or Mayo's Literature teacher transcribing the text. When asked, teachers and administrators frequently reasoned that this only existed in Board level classes and only in the months directly preceding exams. Though the former was largely supported by classroom observations, I'd argue that the latter was true of relatively few teachers. Teachers walked students through their textbooks, chapter-by-chapter, making sure to cover the full syllabus while focusing in on concepts likely to appear on the exam based on previous years' papers and on the importance of an answer's language and format. "Underline this," "box this section," "they asked this last year," "skip this," "revise here," "this will come on the exam," and so forth were common utterances. Without a doubt, such pedagogy certainly intensified in the months preceding Board exams, but a preoccupation with exam prep, the textbook, and language appeared consistently throughout the year.

Recently, there were attempts by the Ministry and Boards of Education to deter rote-memorization. For instance, the Open Text Based Assessment (OTBA), a part of Class IX and XI students' final exams in March,[82] was one attempt by the CBSE Board to encourage analytical implementations as well as more open-ended, extrapolative, and intersectional learning by allowing them to use their textbooks to answer the exam's question. However, while this format may remove some of the pressures to memorize what's in the book, it still reinforces the notion that students should consider the text their main resource of knowledge.

So why does this focus on regurgitating the text exist among those writing or grading the CBSE or ISCE/ICS Board exams? It couldn't just be that their authority was considered so high that students showing understanding in their own words would be marked wrong, or that concerns over standardization were so strict, or that the realities of grading thousands of papers (inter)nationally in a short span of time demanded small variation among "correct" answers,

[82] In March 2015, consideration about including exams in Classes X and XII as well came to the fore.

though some of these are partially true. The fact that a reliance on using the "right words" exists not just in language-heavy subjects but in those heavily reliant on math suggested that varying levels of subject-matter and English-language competency among Board exams *graders* may be at play as well.

In front of a room of Class IX students at Mayo Girls', Math Sir was giving instructions in Hindi on how to correctly transfer irregular geometric shapes from a test booklet over to an answer sheet using a protractor, ruler, and 90-degree guidelines. Prior to the class, students had "warned" me about this teacher, mostly how he got frustrated when students didn't answer him quickly enough.

"But we can never understand him. He's really old and talks in really loud Hindi," offered one student, followed by a few others comically providing interpretations of his voice.

It was somewhat ironic or perhaps just a coincidence, then, that following his directives on irregular shapes Sir added in slightly halting English to the class,

"Be mindful, you're not solving the problem for yourself. You're writing this for a person who knows OK-kind of English, same with Hindi. They don't necessarily have their BA, MA in Math. This is how you get your marks. You only get one chance in 10th to get the full marks. Otherwise, it's all over."

Though 9th Standard is a non-Board year, Math Sir was already stressing the idea that using the "right words" (or, at least, right mathematical proofs or methods of showing your work) was more important than simply getting the right answer in situations where others, perhaps with comparably lacking subject matter or English skills, are grading your proficiency.

Khan (2011) in his work on an elite American boarding school presented instances where students from "othered" racial or gender identities felt it necessary to alter their styles of speech,

writing, dress, comportment, etc. in order to achieve legitimate or successful modes of being at such an institution. These students argued that they had to learn to "bullshit" their way through school, saying the same things they always said but in a way approved by the institutions and those within. Their "recipe for success [was] simply one of translation," of saying "the same thing" but in a language that was not their own (Khan 2011:103). In the Indian schooling system, however, one can argue that everyone, regardless of background or identity, must play this game. Private coaching centers and tuitions only solidified the felt-need for and efficacy of these approaches, however, with an interesting spin on language use.

In late August, I attended a two-hour Accounts/Economics session with a few MGDians at CP Sir's Raja Park location, squeezing into the one open desk in the front of the room, packed with 64 chatty students, 34 boys and 30 girls. As soon as CP Sir walked into the room, a man in his thirties with a serious face and slick side-part, the room fell dead silent. He quickly took his place at the front of the room, standing on a tiny platform about a foot off the ground directly abutting the first row of desks, and barked, "*Dekho*" [Look], signaling the start. Throughout the lesson, CP Sir spoke in rapid Hindi dictating to the room through a kind of drill sergeant call-and-response, breaking into English only when offering a definition, formula, or keyword. "…who organize factors of production," he said to the class and then repeated, "Who organize factors of…," briefly pausing for the students to respond in unison, "Production," filling in the blank. Again, he repeated, louder, "Who organize factors of…?" The students responded, "Production!" scribbling furiously in their notebooks. This pattern went on for two hours. Call, response, repeat, punctuated only by a, "*Thīk bāt*?" [OK?], at the end of each topic to which the students would respond in unison, "Yes, Sir." It was dynamic and, also, slightly unnerving. At

the end of the class, the two MGDians to my right and left admitted that they weren't coming to school the next day. They had tuitions from nine in the morning until 2pm.

As observed with CP Sir, one of the points of interest with coaching is how it interacts with and challenges different ideologies of "quality" schooling in India. Not only are tuition centers commonly understood as "cram schools," rooted in rote memorization and more utilitarian techniques, constructed as the antithesis of Indian Public Schools' stated "whole person" ideals, but they also largely disregard the prominence given to English as *the* language of "elite" education. Correspondence courses or virtual-distance learning centers (as well as e-tuitions) offer another prime example.

Having tea with a teacher from Welham Girls', she informed me that her son, a student at Welham Boys', attended a correspondence course in the city a few times a week.

"It's an institute where they watch a live feed from Delhi and then can type questions, remarks, into an online computer system and the instructor responds," she explained.

One afternoon, we drove over to the institute. It was called *Vidyamandir* ["temple of knowledge"], a sign outside the building read, "*Gurukul* for IIT/JEE Preparation." I found it instantly amusing that a virtual coaching center would liken itself to the highly-valued Vedic system of learning. It was the first time the Welham Girls' teacher had observed her son's tuitions class. The room was small and painted white. A long set of desks and benches occupied by about 15 male students silently wrote in their notebooks looking forward at a screen on which a live feed displayed a male instructor who seemed to be on a huge stage wearing a savvy-looking headset speaking to an auditorium full of students. Every now and then a student in the institute's classroom would stand up, walk to the computer set up in front of the screen, type something in and wait for the instructor to acknowledge the comment or question, often through

some kind of, "*Sahī hei, Dehradun* [That's right, Dehradun]." The Welham Girls' teacher watched with me intently for a few minutes and then said,

"I'm really surprised he's teaching in Hindi….I thought they'd be teaching in English."

This was common. Many parents I spoke to throughout the year assumed that their daughters' coaching lessons were conducted in English. Yet, as I found from first-hand visits to 26 "centers" in four cities and from speaking with students, close to all coaching instructors spoke almost exclusively in Hindi with English appearing only briefly for numbers, years, specialized vocabulary, terms, or definitions, as seen with CP Sir. Some students (and parents once they knew) rationalized that this was because certain instructors weren't that strong in English (something often confirmed after class in our interviews); Hindi-medium students attended tuitions too; students learned better and revised more often in their first language; and, as offered by one MGD alumna rather succinctly, coaching centers "don't have Anglicized reputations to upkeep."

There are then instances of coaching centers and their instructors directly questioning or undermining the importance of Public Schools, their "whole person" approaches, and the quality of preparation offered therein. In a CLAT (law) course off-campus in Jaipur, for example, an instructor advised students about the importance of reading newspapers above all else in order to crack the current events section of the exam by saying, "You can afford to skip a meal; you can skip sleep; any party; any weird, unnecessary extra-curricular event like happens at MGD all the time, but read the newspaper every day." On other occasions, students, including a principal's son, noted that their coaching instructors regularly spoke poorly of in-school teaching, poking fun at certain whole-student pedagogies as a waste of time.

Public School teachers regularly cited the negative outcomes they experienced thanks to the rise of private tuitions. These included reduced motivation; a de-professionalization of teaching that undercuts the higher education, training, degrees, certifications, and continued professional development necessary for school teaching by recognizing coaching instructors as legitimate and then affording them comparably higher remuneration; and career gender-bias as men mostly run and work at these coaching centers, earning higher pay, because they are able to work longer hours due to a relative lack of home responsibilities and/or safety issues. Yet many, while citing the negativity of situations like Kota, stated that coaching in general was mostly meeting a need, a necessary evil for today's competitive times, especially if students have working or "uneducated" parents who feel unable to help. And, as already displayed, most even sent their own children either because they thought they should attend or their children asked to go. I also encountered a number of Public School teachers who offered their own coaching classes for subject-based Board exams, usually at their off-campus homes after school or over holidays. All-girls' Public Schools have certain rules for this whereby teachers are not supposed to charge their own students for private tuitions. Most stood by these rules, stating that even though the monetary returns for serving as a private tutor were greater than their normal yearly compensation teaching at the Public Schools it would be unethical to charge their own students. Still, a number of students claimed that more "money minded" teachers did, in fact, charge them. In these latter cases, students specified that such teachers would purposefully not teach well in class, advertise their tuitions services at parent-teacher meetings (PTMs) as solutions to student performance, and even give higher marks to those who attended their private lessons, a kind of favoritism of sorts encouraging students to sign-up. Though such individuals were few, it took

only one or two examples for students to say they had lost varying degrees of trust or motivation in their school classes. This was expressed by one student, Meenal,

"Even though they know a lot, many of them have their PhDs in their subject, I think a few just want to earn a lot of money," she opined. "I can give an example. Like with the PTMs… my father comes and asks, 'What's happening? How is she doing? Is she improving?' and she goes," mimicking her teacher's lilting voice, "'You just do one thing…tell her to come to my place from 4 to 7, she'll study each and every subject, and you'll see the improvement there itself.' And it's not the first time she's saying it! Like in 11th Standard my father came, three times for PTM, and he's like, 'I'm not going to Ms. Bhatt anymore; she just wants our money."

I asked whether Ms. Bhatt didn't teach fully in class to encourage students to attend her tuitions or simply sold them as supplementary support. I had heard other students on campus say that she even kept her own paying guest house for day-scholars as another way to earn money.

"No, she teaches in class but she just gives the subtitles," Meenal stated. "Not the way she teaches in coaching. Like, my friend, she goes to her coaching and everything, you know, and it's on the tips of her fingers, all this information…because she's learning the proper things from her tuitions, example papers from previous years, and all that."

By perceiving tuitions as venues for learning the "proper things," that is, the "right information" or "right way," to crack the exams, they become considered expectations or at least prerequisites for success by students such as Meenal and challenge the importance of school. In late April, while sitting in the back of a Class XI Physics class, I was poked by my desk buddy who gestured to the front of the room, making sure I didn't miss an important aspect of the lesson, and said with overt frustration, "See how she just wrote the formula up on the board and doesn't even explain it, just expects us to mug it up?"

"Yea…," I said, agreeably. "So, what can you do…coaching?"

She shrugged her shoulders, "What else? *Everyone* goes to coaching. You go because others go. Even if you don't really need it, you go. The questions that come on those exams do not match what's taught in our books at all. I just started at Allen – Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 4 to 8."

In the student's summarization of the lack of motivation felt by teachers and students, practices of mugging up, the supposed misalignment between Board curricula and entrance exams, and the popularity of coaching (all in many ways results of and responsible for each other), she brings up another point, noted by many in this chapter – the compulsion and pressures experienced by families and students to attend tuitions in response to a widespread collective sense that *everyone* is (or should be) going. Coaching in essence provides a foil to the supremacy of Public School approaches to pedagogy, language, and capital, as *the* way to succeed, gain access to prestigious universities and jobs, and, as we'll see in the next section, to earn elite "tags," networks, and opportunities to socialize.

The Tuition Compulsion:
The Loss and Expansion of Social Networks

Private lessons or "tuitions" are by no means new phenomena in India. Private tutoring through governesses and the like in earlier centuries served not only as precursors but alternatives to formal schooling for those of the upper castes and classes of feudal India (and Britain among other societies), especially for girls. And even when those such as Maharani Gayatri Devi were sent to formal schools outside their homes, families still often employed tutors to provide extra educational help or training in certain skills. In the decades following

independence tuitions became less common as access to formal schooling expanded, becoming ever more associated with students who were falling behind, needed extra help, or required some remedial instruction. As one early MGD alumna told me,

"It was for weaker students. It used to be a dirty word that was meant for unintelligent kids. It was nothing to be *proud* of and was certainly not the norm. Now it's an expectation, a requirement, a status symbol – you're a bad parent if you don't send your children for coaching and you are a lazy or unfocused student if you don't go."

Today, the functions of tuitions have swelled to a point where they are utilized at every level of education including pre-primary, in order to garner admissions into private nursery or primary schools; secondary; and tertiary levels, specialized for almost every subject, course, school, or college, largely in preparation for some exam. As is the case, such debates over the merit of school entrance exams and the existence of expansive and expensive systems of "shadow education" are matters of concern *globally*. Several articles and studies have emerged documenting their incidence in places like Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Britain, and in the U.S. (*e.g.* Foondun 2002; Hernández 2013; Seth 2010). In India specifically, a 2011 Pratham survey (2012:215, 235) indicated that 61.0% of Grade 1 students in rural government schools in Tripura State received private tutoring and the proportion rose to 75.0% in Grade 6 (Bray & Kwo 2013:484). In West Bengal, those proportions were 55.6% and 77.5% (*ibid.*). With that said, the occurrence of private tuitions is still higher in India's urban areas (Bray 1999). In 2012, the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) found that based on a survey of 5,000 parents and students in the Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, and Chandigarh metros, 87% of primary and 95% of secondary school children received private tutoring. They also estimated that the size of India's

private coaching industry in 2012 was approximately $23.7 billion and "likely to touch $40 billion by 2015" (ASSOCHAM India 2014). In comparison, a report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2012 estimated that these sectors could be expected to grow over 15% per year not including numerous unregistered home tutors.

Not only does attending a Public School like MGD, SKV, Mayo, or Welham carry status or tags of elitism related to social class standing and caste heritage, seen as sites for attaining upward mobility, but today attending tuitions in general and certain coaching centers in particular have also become similarly endowed. For one, there is the assumption that everyone is going, regardless of class background, so a kind of "herd mentality" emerges. As put by one senior MGDian,

"Within and between families there is competition and worry over reputation. The thought is if they are going my child should go as well. Oh, this neighbor, that co-worker, my cousin-brother is sending their children; we will take it up as well. Even among us! There is that feeling of, oh my god, you're going to coaching? Maybe I should go also."

So attending, in general, can serve as a marker, not necessarily of status, but of keeping up with the crowd, doing all you can, in an environment of high competition and peer pressure. But, just as there are different tiers of schooling in India there are also tiers of coaching, including a level of "elite" institutes and instructors. There are the industry giants like Allen, Resonance, the Princeton Review, etc., detailed earlier, which often require students to take entrance exams to qualify for their tuitions. These institutes may also take into consideration a student's educational pedigree in making their admissions decisions. Recall how Saundarya's sister earned entry into Allen's highest class level in Kota simply based on her Mayo Girls' credential – "The Mayo name goes a long way." Earning a spot at these institutes, therefore, can

signify a student's merit in addition to a family's socio-economic background and standing. Depending on their chosen course load, students' families pay on average between Rs 25,000 to Rs 75,000 per annum, with some admittedly paying well over 1 lakh (Rs 100,000) when accounting for room and board expenses. Other students set up at PGs that can cost around Rs 7,000-8,000 for monthly rent and sometimes meals. Still, many Public School students would tell me that these fees paled in comparison to a full year of tuition, boarding, and ancillary costs at schools like Mayo, Welham, or SKV. One Mayoite said that her family would likely *save* money by sending her to Kota,

"Here at Mayo it's around 1.5 to 2 lakh [Rs 150,000 to 200,000] where coaching will only be around Rs 40,000 a year with an extra 12,000 or so for PG."

Among the Public School community, it was thought that the families of students, largely day-scholars, who attended schools like MGD *and* attended hours of regular coaching throughout the week were really the ones who experienced the monetary burden of tuitions (albeit day-scholar tuition and fees are generally much lower than boarders'). These were the students who largely attended more local, "all-star" institutes and instructors "renowned" in certain cities, their names similarly inducing thoughts of "quality" and "exclusivity," not to a mention price.

In places like Jaipur, Gwalior, Dehradun, and Ajmer, coaching advertisements are everywhere – in national and local newspapers and magazines, on TV commercials, billboards, signs, and flyers, painted on sides of buildings, buses, and rickshaws, in English and Hindi – proclaiming the world-class reputations, resources, and results of certain institutes and/or instructors. Many of these institutes are known simply by the name of their head instructor(s). In Jaipur, for example, MGDians would mention going to any number of "Sirs," their names

synonymous with their subjects of expertise. You need Math tuitions, you go to HM Sir. For PCB tuitions, Ravi Sir was the best; and for Accounts or Eco? It was no question, CP Sir. Students would tell stories about CP Sir's fancy cars and how he was the "it" instructor if you wanted to top the exams. After operating for around 12-years in a two-story residence in one of Jaipur's popular market area, CP Sir's tuitions became so popular that he opened a second location in the city in 2012, now just as busy. Students, parents, and teachers spoke of him as a kind of Jaipur celebrity. Students even kept their own "CP Sir Students' Confession Page" on a popular social media webpage where they anonymously commented on his teaching prowess and, rather regularly, on his looks and marital status – "luv your smile;" "crazy about his looks…I find him very cute;" "CP Sir you're hot!"; "I wonder if CP Sir is married." Even as CP Sir was admittedly a more extreme case relative to others I observed, the reverence and tag associated with him were not. The prestige of certain tutors and coaching centers appears across India and internationally.[83] In India, students who attend such coaching centers too receive praise and visibility not only through word of mouth but photo appearances in various institute advertisements as "toppers" who "cracked" the exam.

Outside the possibilities of acquiring social prestige or tags, attending tuitions off-campus also provides students with opportunities to socialize. Similar to Bhavika's understanding of Kota and the MGD principal's for why students would prefer leaving campus for coaching even when offered in-house, tuitions can serve as a "social hub" to meet up with friends, not only with those from other "types" of schools but with the opposite sex as well – to see (if not interact with) boys, grab a few snacks, wear "street clothes" (on occasion), and work with male instructors. Coming from an all-girls' school, the opportunity to interact with and around boys

[83] In Hong Kong, for example, "star tutors" can be seen all over, on billboards that loom over highways and on the exteriors of shopping malls; and "invariably, the local teaching celebrities are young, attractive and dressed in designer outfits befitting pop stars" (Tsoi 2013).

was something many students said better prepared them for “real life” situations post-graduation such as university or a job where they would have to interact with boys without seeming awkward. Interestingly, however, gender-segregation occurred rather regularly in coaching venues. While some instructors, like CP Sir, required girls to sit in the front of class and boys to sit in the back, at almost all other centers I visited students self-selected into gender-specific seating.

Walking into a math tuition with an MGDian one afternoon, for instance, I went to sit at a bench close to the door when she corrected me, “No, we sit over here,” motioning to the benches on the left side of the room.

As the class filled, I noticed all the girls were sitting on the left and the boys on the right. “So, the instructor wants you to sit separate like this?” I asked.

“No…I don’t know,” she laughed, “We just always sit this way.”

Over the year and across several cities’ tuition centers this pattern persisted, though a few were slightly more integrated than others with, say, somewhat expected gender-based clusters instead of cardinal segregation as is common at such ages even in U.S. classrooms. One MGDian stated that she travelled all the way to the far edges of Jaipur to attend her uncle’s coaching classes because her father wanted someone he trusted to “keep an eye” on her, making sure she wasn’t interacting with boys. Though a number of students said they used coaching as a place to focus on their studies since school could be distracting with all its extra-curriculars and the constant company of friends, as put by one MGDian – “School is for socializing, tuitions for learning” – others, like one Welhamite, conversely held that coaching was more distracting than school – “School classes are better as I get distracted by others trying to socialize with the other gender at coaching.” Still others found neither distracting but stated that each served separate but

equally important purposes – "School is for a diploma, a tag, co-curriculars; tuitions is for exam prep and revision," offered an MGDian; or as this SKVian explained, "School is where you learn, coaching is where you practice."

In a way, Public School students are led to compartmentalize their educational experiences, where and how they gain the skills, knowledge, tools, and tags necessary to "succeed" in today's competitive environment of exams and access. As students leave or skip out on Public Schools for coaching, in-part or completely, and switch back and forth from school to school to achieve the right combination of institutional prestige, Board of Education, Stream prowess, subject offerings, co-curricular opportunities, and coaching, the social ties and networks that often provide elite access and stability are at times broken and only in few instances expanded without consequence. There were those like Divanshi at Mayo who claimed to not have many friends from switching schools so many times and Saumya from MGD who stated that it was difficult to make friends and missed her social life while in Kota. Then there were those like Rohini who found her circle of friends grew when she came to SKV only after she was bullied at the start and took the time to adjust, and Saundarya the Mayoite who when asked if she'd be lonely at Kota replied, "There will be no time for being lonely," with a rather excited tone, "I hear you just study *all* the time." In all these examples are stories of such an education system's larger dynamics, wherein the paths and pressures to succeed in the immediate often lessen or relocate the importance of the social.

Concluding Thoughts:
The Faustian Bargain

Hurriedly walking from MGD's main building out toward the peripheries of campus toward the student dorms one afternoon, I struggled to keep up with Ms. Srivastava, the English

teacher, brushing up dust and pebbles from the dry, shrub-lined pathways with my sandals and disturbing a few crows hovering in the over-hanging trees in the process. We were on our way to proctor a few students' Class XI speaking portion of the ASL (Assessment of Speaking and Listening), a 10-12 minute audio- or video-recorded evaluation of students speaking on pre-determined topics and then solving problems from a set of "task cards,"[84] and Ms. Srivastava was not holding back her frustrations.

"What a real waste of time. And I doubt other schools are doing this. I mean, look who we are and we barely have digital recorders to get this done. How are other schools doing it? These English requirements just become an extra burden for prestigious schools. We are just expected to get it done. I'm sure other CBSE schools with lesser resources are not being held to such expectations."

Outside our destination, a handful of students were pacing, staring intently at papers in their hands, some mouthing silently or speaking aloud to themselves. Up the stairs into the screened-in, pink veranda of Gitangeli House, an upper-primary dorm, three students were waiting for our arrival. As Ms. Srivastava went inside to set-up, I joined the girls on the veranda, taking up my own white plastic chair, usually the perch of the House matron. Tripti was looking over a slightly crumpled, lined sheet of paper, reading and re-reading aloud a fully written essay. She was attempting to memorize some rather involved paragraphs about the differences between her grandmother, mother, and herself in terms of technology use. She even had a quote written down by Benjamin Franklin which was, as far as I could tell, not particularly related to the topic. I had witnessed a sizable number of debate competitions, in English and in Hindi, where the use of direct quotations was common. While students frequently told me that judges loved that sort

[84] In 2013, the topics made available to students ahead of time were health and fitness, natural resources, media and networking, the business world, ethics and values, the elderly, urbanization, adolescence, inventors and inventions, sports and sportsmanship, careers, and art and aesthetics (CBSE ASL Specifications for Speaking—Class XI 2013).

of thing, half the quotations used didn't usually make much sense or weren't real quotes at all but presented as truisms (*e.g.* "people often say…," or "as a wise man once said…") in order to add a sort of legitimacy or backing to their forthcoming claims. I asked Tripti why she didn't just write down a few points and then speak off the cuff.

"Because then it might come out all wrong. I don't know why I'm doing it or what it means, but I don't want to fall behind my classmates, so I'll memorize it," she said.

Students were scored individually on criteria such as "interactive competence," "fluency," "pronunciation," and "language" (accuracy and range). I joined Tripti when she was called into the testing room. She did not do well. Though her first few sentences went smoothly, after a minute or so she began to stumble, her eyes looking upward as if reaching back into her mind in an attempt to remember those pre-written sentences. She would start and then re-start a sentence, realize she couldn't remember the rest or that she had forgotten to say a line that came before, and eventually froze. Ms. Srivastava tried to help by suggesting she talk informally about how she used technology. Tripti sat in silence for a minute before she was able to get another stilted line out and then time was up.

Mahi was up next. Upon entering the room she immediately announced that she had not prepared anything. Ms. Srivastava looked annoyed to which Mahi admitted, "I'm sorry! I forgot. Total mind melt! I had this exam for CLAT [coaching] this weekend." With all that said, however, Mahi did pretty well. Her session was more conversational and more relaxed as her "lack" of preparation forced her to think through the prompts on the spot and then express those thoughts using her own words. After five more students came through that afternoon a clear pattern had emerged – those who tried to memorize their answers did significantly worse than

those who quickly made a list of talking points beforehand or admitted to having "not prepared" at all.

The day after, sitting on benches back by the school's canteens with a few seniors who were bunking class in order to copy down each other's notes and study for their up-coming Pre-Boards, I asked what they thought of the whole situation.

"'Work hard,' that's an American vision to education," Sehejneet offered, "Work hard and get ahead, right? But that's not enough here. Everyone's working hard but not everyone will get ahead. The numbers just don't add up…millions of students, maybe thousands of seats, but only hundreds in good schools and half taken for reservations. Scoring up until [sic] 99% mark may not even be enough. 'Work smart,' that's the Indian mentality…. Sometimes you see this as corruption at the higher levels of life, or favoritism, who knows who and all. Here [in school]…it's bunking," she said, laughing subtly and then gesturing to her notes, "copying…it's mugging up, you know?"

Sehejneet not only identified the usefulness of networks and favors as means to get ahead in India despite common associations with corruption, but acknowledges certain aligned methods used by students like herself at the level of schooling – bunking, copying, and mugging up. Khan (2011) has argued for a gendered approach to understanding elite displays of "ease," *i.e.* "a sense of self and a mode of interaction that advantage" those who experience "feeling comfortable in just about any social situation" (*ibid.*:14-15), being that it is harder for girls to display "requisite ease" and therefore "have to work harder than boys" (*ibid.*:121). Many of the girls I spoke with at these Indian Public Schools would agree.

"There is a feeling among us girls, you know," stated a Mayo Girls' student, "that we have to work twice as hard to receive half as much recognition as boys here in Indian society."

Another 11th Standard student at MGD explained the perceived divide by saying, "The 21st century is all about being fake, an illusion. And you know, they say girls are at par now. Why now? Girls have *worked* to come to par. And that's something [society is] not recognizing. We're working, we've studied…. Girls tend to work harder and longer just to be considered. For example, when we went to the IPSC Cultural Fest, the boys underperformed, and they were blamed. Girls, we underperformed, and everyone was like, *aré, larkhi hei; kuch nahin hota hei* [oh, they're girls; nothing will happen]. They're just girls, *hei na* [right]? What do you expect? Even in sports, MGDians are doing so good in sports, but even if they weren't, *kuch nahin hota hei* [nothing will happen]. There are no expectations of girls achieving at large still. It's expected that nothing really happened. It shouldn't happen that way!"

To this end, girls usually maintain higher CGPAs and score better than their male counterparts on national Board exams. On the 2016 CBSE Class XII Boards, for example, 78.85% of boys and 88.58% of girls (or 9.73% more) cleared the exam, while the total pass percentage of the country was 83.05%, up from previous years. The top three cumulative scores went to girls, scoring 99.4%, 99.2%, and 99% respectively, two from convent schools and one from a Public School, all three in Delhi or the capital's state of Haryana. The nation's "topper" became an immediate sensation, appearing in every imaginable media outlet, images of her family feeding her *prasād* [blessed sweets] and interviews asking her to detail her daily study schedule were everywhere. When the CBSE scores were released at the end of May, social media newsfeeds became a flurry of nervous memes and announcements, MGDians and SKVians declaring their percentage breakdowns by subject or cumulative scores, most in the 90th percentile. There was a sense of relief, excitement, and thanks in most, yet the opportunities for peer-to-peer comparisons abounded, and one was left wondering about those students who did

not post their scores. However, there is little time for such consideration, as students are then quickly off to take various university entrance exams, the next hurdle to admission. Many students even wait to find out their Board scores before settling fully on a college or course goal, as they know their scores will determine the likelihood of their acceptance.

And even as those like Anjali and Sehejneet describe these experiences and practices as matters of "Indian culture" or the "Indian mentality," they serve as case studies for a more global reality, an epidemic of high stakes testing and competition, where students, even at the most prestigious of schools, are left second guessing the methods and purpose of their education. It becomes a Faustian bargain – surrender to early academic pressure, test prep, daunting homework regimes, coaching, and debilitating stress and the brass ring (*i.e.* college, an honors course, a prominent position, wealth, success, etc.) will be within reach. Yet as we see with students like Tripti, not only is success in the immediate, opportunities in the future, or access in general *not* ensured through such methods, especially for girls, but concerns over language, the prioritization of the text, and "learning without understanding" regularly prove disempowering or even paralyzing in other settings, leaving students risk averse or at least unprepared to engage in the social. Public Schools are therefore left to mediate "whole person" ideologies within a system that seldom rewards it, teachers to stay motivated in a profession undermined by private tuitions, and female students to stay or become the elite of consideration in an oversaturated, (inter)national network of competitive higher education.

The next chapter will focus particularly on these concerns over language – their role and use as differentiated signifiers of classed and gendered personhoods and collectives, where stylized engagements with English, Hindi, or "othered" dialects carry specific ideological weights and opportunities for students.

CHAPTER 5

The Language Medium "Divide": English-Hindi Ideologies and Styles of Status

In a morning assembly following winter break, MGD's principal stood before the school body and stated, "Who are we? We are an IPSC, private, CBSE, English-medium, all-girls', boarding-cum-day school with a history, traditions…a supposed legacy." She then went on to describe a specific focus for the remainder of the term, one expected of all students – "I'd like us to concentrate for these next few months on 'T.E.N.' 'T' for 'timeliness,' not tardiness, not bunking classes or skipping school for co-curriculars and tuitions. 'E' for 'English;' even walking to assembly today every girl who passed me was speaking in Hindi. Your parents *chose* to send you to an English-medium school *not* so you can go about speaking Hindi but so you can practice and improve. It's not about teachers constantly having to tell you to speak in English, but a directive amongst yourselves. And 'N' for 'noise;' Board exams are fast approaching and we have to create an environment conducive to learning so your seniors can perform well."

In the previous chapter, teachers and students regularly emphasized the importance of saying things in the "right way" or of using the "right words" in relation to marks, academic expectations, and more utilitarian approaches to schoolwork. This focus, however, is essentially embedded in larger discourses concerning language itself. Chaise LaDousa (2005:545) in his work on language medium differences in Varanasi schools called for the "duel necessity of considering languages as ideological constructs and considering languages' social locations and values." It is in this vein that this chapter examines the ways the English language, its use and meaning, of as well as those of Hindi or other vernaculars and dialects in its wake, enveloped

notions of identity, status, and belonging at all-girls' Indian Public Schools since their founding – dynamics still at work today, though in notably altered ways.

For one, language use, proficiency, and style often emerge as narratives describing "educatedness" and future prospects. English, in particular, is regarded in India as a language of empowerment, *i.e.* as a means to access knowledge, diverse, (inter)national or cosmopolitan audiences, and opportunities for economic development and income-generating employment, especially for girls (Esche 2009; Nussbaum 1988, 1992, 2000; Sen 1984, 1992, 2005). These invocations reflect both human capital and capability approaches to development, captured in the beseeching call of MGD's principal for students to use school as a space/time to "practice and improve" their English. With that said, the principal's words were also a reaction to recent anxieties over perceived loss of school character and status, attributes in part thought established *through* language. In this sense, language can serve as a mask behind which other interests lie – while passionate attachments and commitments to language may arise, these feelings are usually more about the self it represents. With language, "it is one's sense of self that is at stake, one's self-respect, one's sense of importance, the loss of the sense of centrality of one's person in a world of communication" (Brass 2010:364-5). Secondly, and rather relatedly, then, language competencies can also constitute a sociolinguistic marker of position, as an exercise in social segmentation rather than just a tool for economic empowerment (Mansoor 1993, 2005). In South Asia as elsewhere, elite processes of absorption and displacement of local dialects and languages have worked in these ways to form "standardized" forms, often hybrids of multiple *shuddh* [pure] languages, to both connect them to those in power and differentiate them from the masses. This "standardization has a way of 'erasing' the existence and use of non-standardized forms, labelled 'dialects'" (LaDousa 2005:462), of empowering certain languages and disempowering

others. It has also historically placed Indian elites in a "mediating position" (Swaan 2001), of, say, knowing English and Hindi, and then naming versions of "Hinglish" as their own standardized form. Education and Indian Public Schools, in particular, have played essential roles in these processes, as venues where the value and "correct" usage of specific languages are determined and regulated.

Alongside varying traditions and missions of teaching Indian languages, all-girls' Public Schools continue to afford English primacy, identified as *the* language of the global elite and educated. Yet, as this chapter will explore, students, in diversely interpreting linguistic ideologies alongside everyday practice and peer-group sociality, in many ways mirror as much as challenge these institutional frameworks. What remains the same, however, is that language continues to serve as a symbolic tool for exercising power and influence (Esche 2009:2), just perhaps in different ways. For example, though many students tended to match their schools' sentiments in terms of a specific language's instrumental or moral importance, it was often in the establishment of "empowered" *social* identities that students varied their use of and significance given to a particular language or style, according to context and audience, whether to mark difference, regulate belonging, or exert power over others. In addition to more practical explanations of skill and demographic diversity, then, I contend that (senior) peer groups emerge as primary influencers in student language choice, particularly in terms of how certain languages and styles come to signify social class, gender, and capability. It is within these moments and spaces that female students engage in flexible mediations of language in order to belong or exclude through narratives of school character, status, (inter)national identities, youth-culture "coolness," and educated femininity.

In order to arrive at such arguments, this chapter specifically examines: (a) What are the relationships between all-girls' Public Schools, language medium, ideology, and practice; what is at stake in their continued assurance; (b) How do female students express and experience the value of certain languages; (c) How is language used to create lines of difference and belonging; who do they separate or include; (d) How is language regulated or policed; by whom; and (e) What roles do class and gender play in these processes?

Languages of Power:
The Indian Public School Medium

English medium schools such as those set up by Christian missionaries in the 19th century and later by imperial-feudal partnerships in the Chiefs' Colleges represent the power and prestige afforded the English language on the subcontinent. They were institutions where a certain fluency, that is, one preferably with the British style of pronunciation, was linked to an individual's or family's social location and mobility. It was through the English language, that Macaulay imagined creating an Indian upper class able to mediate between the British rulers and Indian masses. Through these schools, English was constructed as a language of power, an international or global language [*antarrastrabhasa*], as "modern," the key to earning coveted and comparably lucrative appointments within the imperial government for men or well-positioned marriage arrangements for women. At the same time, there were also those who spoke up for the supremacy of Indian vernaculars particularly in the context of schools and their medium(s) of instruction. Such proponents assembled language ideologies establishing Indian vernaculars as "mother tongues" [*matrabhasa*] or languages of the land [*des ki bhasa*], the village [*gav ki bhasa*], the home [*ghar ki bhasa*], the region, or the nation [*rastrabhasa*] while fashioning

English as foreign, an imperial medium of external control. And there were also those who saw the need for both.

Such debates intensified with independence, resulting in a series of commissions and legislation throughout the 1960s to determine India's national language. Education was at the core of these discussions for "education makes a few constitutionally recognized standardized languages into emblems of the nation" (LaDousa 2005:462). The stances and views of Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru on education and language are representative of these varying positions – Tagore was a proponent of Western education and the use of English; Gandhi was a nativist in favor of "Basic Education" and the place of Hindustani (with Sanskrit-derived idiolect and Devanagari script); and Nehru was a utilitarian whose motto, "unity in diversity," represented a need for linguistic integration through multilingualism. Much of these debates over language also veiled larger debates among elite circles concerning religious, caste, or regional supremacy (*e.g.* Hindu attachments to Hindi/Sanskrit; Muslims to Urdu; northern versus southern languages). Though Hindi was made an official language around 1965, English was also made an "associate official language" under the Official Languages Act in 1967, giving India a multilingual mandate (LaDousa 2005:461). Afterwards, under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the Kothari Commission (1964-66) devised a "three-language formula" requiring the teaching of a combination of three languages in pre-university curriculum (*ibid.*). Northern states were to teach Hindi, English, and another modern Indian language such as a southern or Dravidian language. Southern states, in comparison, were to teach a regional language, Hindi, and English (*ibid.*:462). Not only did this formula favor the north geographically and associations with the urban, educated, and upper-class by making Hindi and English required in *all* regions and states, but northern states for the most part disregarded the

government's suggestion of a South Indian third language (usually due to lack of capable teachers), in its place offering Sanskrit, Bengali, Urdu, French, or German (*ibid.*). Thus, ideological pushes and pulls over language, in the education policies of British colonialism, (regional) nationalism, and globalization, further influenced today by technology and forms of social media, have contributed to the existence, acceptance, and standardization of multilingualism within Indian schools. However, LaDousa (2010:546, 544) posits that while "[t]here exist in societies such as India the possibility of a lasting and contextually appropriate multilingualism…, multilingualism is never neutral. One language tends to be elevated over the other, at least for certain purposes and for use in certain domains." Or as described by Paul Brass (2010:360-61):

> In their initial and developing stages, language movements are everywhere vehicles for the pursuit of economic advancement, social status, and political power by specific elites. The dialect/language chosen, as well as its form and style, constitute political as well as "linguistic acts," in which the type of linguistic act chosen arises from different "social conditions" (Annamalai 1989, p.226). In other words, different elites in different social and political circumstances may choose a borrowing strategy or a purification strategy, depending on the political and economic goals they choose and whether or not they wish to identify with or distance themselves from another group.

Schools like MGD, SKV, Welham, and Mayo in tandem with their brother schools were in many ways the (secular) stages on which such explorations of schooling and its relationships to language in northern India took place. Language training for upper-caste Indian girls was seen as a route to empowerment, identity, and belonging (*i.e.* among the British and (inter)national, upper-class elite as well as among men) as much as about establishing new differences, othering lower caste/class women and older generations. Though English was afforded primacy at these schools, early Headmistresses like Miss Lutter and Miss Linnell argued for the place and importance of Indian languages as well. Hindi and Sanskrit, for example, were encouraged through formal classes, debates, and the performing arts. Yet spoken English was expected in

class and in most everyday instances on campus, despite and because of the fact that many girls arrived on campus knowing no English. MGD alumnae recalled receiving demerits on their "behaviour sheets" if they were caught speaking Hindi instead of English. Having a large portion of early teachers from the South or abroad where English was common assisted in its regulation.

"So in morning assemblies anybody with more than three minus marks on their behaviour sheet would have their name read out and everyone would say, 'Shame; shame; shame,' quietly in a kind of hiss," explained one alumna, laughing at the memory. "It was done quite seriously and was certainly an incentive not to repeat such things again."

The focus was on a particular kind of British English, done with a certain flare of intonation. Students at MGD and Welham Girls' described looking up to their Headmistresses in this way, relating their styles of pronunciation to a kind of class and grace. This prowess in English quickly became a source of institutional identity and pride.

In late August at an MGD Alumnae Guild meeting held in the formal conference room off the dining hall, Class XII student council members were invited to weigh-in on a discussion regarding school fund-raising to help (a) renovate the campus and (b) off-set the RTE Act losses over the coming years. Sitting in some plastic chairs behind the room's large, central, wooden table, waiting for the session to begin, the senior students chatted in Hindi about what they were wearing that evening to the Model United Nations' (MUN) closing ceremony. MGD was hosting a number of schools on-campus that week and everyone was looking forward to the catered meal and dancing that would occur after the formalities. Overhearing their conversation, an alumna turned from her spot at the end of table and asked,

"Girls, how often do you talk in English? Do you speak it in class, in the hostels? What about out of class?

The girls glanced at each other tentatively before one admitted that they usually spoke in Hindi all the time, except for sometimes in class.

Surprised, the alumna admonished, "But this is a globalizing world and you have to continue the MGD name and tradition of strong English skills! It's not that you should not use your Hindi, but really focus on bettering your English. When you travel and go abroad, it is MGD that is known for having strong English, and a nice accent, the correct use of prepositions. You must pass on the English tradition to the classes under you. I used to mimic Miss Lutter and how she spoke, her mannerisms, you know, the British English. MGDians used to be known the world round for their English skills."

The students listened politely enough but then quietly laughed, a few pulling faces as the alumna turned back around and the Guild session began.

In pressing these students to better their English, the alumna invokes fear over potential lost school prestige more so than any argument for its utilitarian purposes. Should they go abroad, students' abilities to uphold the MGD name through its linguistic traditions are made key, not necessarily their abilities to better communicate. In a similar instance a few months later, an Old Girl, Blue House Captain in her time, came to campus to speak with MGD's principal distraught over a video she had seen posted online. It was a student documentary about the school's heritage made for a House competition in which the alumna was "horrified to see that in every frame the girls were speaking in Hindi." She lamented to the principal how she was sitting with some friends at the time who began making fun of MGD for this reason. Again, there was a worry over lost status and reputation through language.

However, many Public School administrators and teachers expressed the necessity and desire today for a different kind of balance marking the pride, identity, and importance inherent

in both languages. On one side, English is still considered an essential element of a Public School education and is recognized as a main reason many parents send their daughters to these schools. Administrators must consider the possibility that applicant numbers may wane if parents believe their English education is not up to par, or that parents will become upset if they see their daughters speaking Hindi when they purposefully sent them to an English medium school. It is for these reasons that English was formally encouraged and regulated on these campuses, as well as continually marked as a source of institutional identity. It was why MGD's principal recommended to students they use English; why a History teacher exploded with frustration in class one day at a group of students discussing a topic in Hindi, "You go to a Public School! You should be speaking English." And it was also why when a Class 3 student's mother came over for dinner at the principal's bungalow one evening and commented that the Annual Day Function had fabulous choreography, mispronouncing the word, her daughter interjected, "No, mom, it's cho-re-o-gra-phy," to which the principal reacted, "Oh ho! Look at you, a true MGDian now!" Still, Hindi is also considered an important, if not secondary, part of Public School character in North India. It aligns with founding missions of balancing the "best of the East" with the "best of the West," presents a more welcoming environment to parents who may be uncomfortable in English, and engages students in one of the region's most common "mother tongues."

Today, Mayo and Welham have become better-known for their English skills and ease of informal use, more so than MGD or SKV. Part of this has to do with student and teacher demographics, the overall number of students, the proportions of boarders versus non-boarders, and affiliated Boards of Education. Not only does MGD have close to three times the number of students, but the vast majority are day-scholars making language difficult to monitor and home language highly influential. There are also those who argue that MGD's larger proportions of

middle class families and RTE students decrease the likelihood that English is spoken at home. Mayo and Welham, by contrast, tend to attract a more upper-middle or upper class clientele with greater regional variation, increasing the likelihood that English is spoken at home or that English serves as the common language among students instead of Hindi. And though SKV tends to have demographics similar to those at MGD, administrators and teachers suggested that since the school transitioned over to a fully boarding model, subsequently decreasing its student enrollment numbers, English usage has increased. At all four schools then, morning assemblies and competitions became places to instruct students in ways to improve their language use as well as celebrate and display multilingualism. While MGD and SKV integrated speeches, prayers, songs, words of the week, and idiomatic lessons in English, Mayo Girls' made sure to hold Hindi-medium assemblies twice a week while Welham also highlighted the importance of Indian vernaculars.

"English is a focus here and most students converse in English, perhaps because the mix is broader," explained the principal of Welham Girls', "but we do encourage pursuits in Indian languages and we certainly do not *punish* students for speaking in Hindi. Can you imagine being punished for speaking your mother tongue? And I should tell you that our school magazine comes out alternatively in Hindi and in English now and the Hindi magazine was an initiative of a girl in this school. She came up to me one day saying, 'In all these English-medium schools the Hindi section is always four pages in the back or something and this is wrong!' So she now edits a Hindi version and it's very lively and read as much as its English sister. Hindi debating is also very important. It's not mocked the way it was when I was growing up…. English is prestigious because it's the language of power; it's the language of communication; it's the language of higher education. But today things are changing. Today you have to be very fluent in both."

To this point, for all the institutional policing, proclamations of linguistic traditions, or anxieties over prestige, it was ultimately *students* who regulated and deemed which languages were ascendant, in what contexts, and to what ends on these campuses. Their engagement with language in terms of school character, opportunity, and sociality positioned English, Hindi, and other Indian vernaculars in ways that (re)interpretated school ideologies and preferred practice among peers. As described by one 11th Standard MGDian,

"I think this whole concept that English is a better language is outdated. I think it's time for it to go. Welhams [sic] and Mayo…they do still take a lot of pride in the fact that they have such strong English literary societies and they're so communicative in English whereas schools like MGD and SKV, they base their reputation on something completely different which is that they are good all girls' schools, they're modern, but different from others because they're still traditional and respect that identity. So I guess that factors in."

Student Ideologies of Language Empowerment: Opportunity, Achievement, and Morality

Much student deliberation over language-use weighed the utilitarian and moral aspects of each, as languages of academic and/or personal empowerment. Purposefully attending English medium schools, with many like Divanshi switching to ICSE schools particularly for a greater focus on English, students collectively agreed that English was indeed a language of power, influence, and international reach, associated with "being educated" on the subcontinent, with the upper-classes and urbanites, regularly rewarded by school, standardized exams, higher education, and lucrative employment. As described by one MGDian,

"An English medium school, you know, it helps a lot. Like when we go for the debates and all that, go to the IPSC competitions, the SAT exam, the TOEFL. In the way you present yourself it is also an important part. You get good opportunities for jobs."

But mostly, English was described as a language of opportunity because it connected students to diverse others, broadening their pool of possible interlocutors through a "common language."

"An English medium school makes you a global citizen, that's what it is," described Ritwika, an 11th Standard student. "It broadens your opportunities, your horizons…because in India we have all these groups of people and the common language which we have is of course English. So the Hindi medium school might restrict you in some places where being from an English medium school will not."

Students like Pratchi and Neha, 12th Standard MGDians, often invoked this narrative in descriptions of their mothers' education.

"My mother speaks proper Hindi but her English is not very strong and she has been limited because of this," stated Pratchi. "English is important if you ever want to be anything in this world or make a name for yourself. If you can speak English, think of all the people who can understand you. Hindi is rather limiting."

Listening and nodding along, Neha added, "Take my mother for instance; she is really my role model. We come from a very traditional Rajput family and my mom still practices some degree of *purdah*. Like, in front of my grandmother she has to put this *lughri* over, to cover her face. She went to some school 'til like 5th Standard but then after I guess it was home schooling. She did the 10th Board, private. And my grandmother never went to school. We call it *unguta chaap*. That means you don't know anything, you're uneducated, and so you have to sign forms

with your thumbprint for the agreement. But my mother has always said that I must study, how important it is for girls to study, be literate, know English. My mother tongue is Marwari, so even coming up to know Hindi was very difficult here at first…. Hindi might have some status here at MGD, but in India, people don't give a shit about the Hindi language. And when we claim otherwise, it's really just Hinglish. The majority of Indians cannot even speak proper Hindi. And if I speak Marwari…forget it! For me it's like if they see me speaking Marwari then literally you will say, 'Ah, what a *tapori* [goon, Mumbai slang of street thugs].' Literally in school when I speak Marwari people are like, 'Ah, shut up. What the heck are you speaking?' If you speak English in front of people it's like, 'Oh my god, that girl is very intelligent. Oh, she's from a good background.' People judge you by your language and by the way you speak. And that's all my mother can speak. So she tells me, even though I don't think it's always right, to get good marks in English only."

Others used this narrative to argue that learning English was also an ethical project as a citizen of India and the world. Sruti, a 12th Standard SKVian, offered such sentiments stating,

"English, I think, really widens your horizons; you get access to more information and other cultures, both in-country and abroad; you can read and understand more forms of news or media or whatnot. And…I think that gives you more confidence. And, if you think about it, how can you say you're Indian if you can only speak with such a small portion of the population? How can you survive, or even contribute, to this globalizing world?"

English, therefore, was considered not only necessary but a moral imperative. It was toward both these ends that Mayo Girls' organized a service project where students taught school *bai jis* and other staff members English. Though, as one 10th Standard Mayoite described it,

"In our school we have this literacy activity but the *bai jis* are just too lazy. They're not that enthusiastic because they've just given up all hope. '*Ab kya parhegi, beta? Ab to zindagi nikal gayi* [What will I student now, child? Now life is gone']. Now, it will take a lot of time to make that thinking, especially in females, change. '*Ek bar* [Once]'…there's this phrase, '*Ek bar dimag mein guz gaya to nikalta nehin hei. Das bar pe chor gaya*.' Once something's in your head you really have to brainwash it ten times to get it out. So, you know, there are *bai jis* like that…. It depends on how enthusiastic you are."

Yet, this could be said about Public School students as well. Enthusiasm, or lack thereof, often led many, like Neha, who did not always agree with the institutionalized ascendancy of English, to argue for the utilitarian and moral obligations of learning Hindi and Indian vernaculars. And many others simply looked to take advantage of the academic opportunities and accolades made available, as a comparably uncontested or less prioritized language among private schools, through Hindi.

Despite its current refocusing on English, for example, MGD has historically prided itself greatly on the quality of its Hindi dramatics and debating talents, using language to set itself apart in a different way. Current MGDians' sociality in Hindi or Hinglish has leant to heightened academic achievements in Hindi and Sanskrit competitions against schools like Mayo and Welham. At the IPSC Literature Festival, for instance, during the Hindi vocabulary quiz, MGD's team dominated. The participating students on occasion would turn around to their classmates seated in the audience with amused or smug faces that expressed how easy they found the previous question or with disbelief when other schools missed a word, allowing the MGD team to steal a point. After one such miss by the Welham Girls' team, a 10th Standard MGDian sitting

next to me whispered, “That was so easy! How did they miss that?” Damini, the 11th Standard MGDian selected to compete in the Hindi elocution and debate events later that week, admitted,

“When it comes to formal debating, I prefer Hindi…because students today are not that well-affiliated with Hindi. I tend to go for Hindi debates because I tend to win!” she said laughingly. “Yea, but English debates are something I need to master because that’s what the world wants. And that’s what happens at MGD also.”

Noting the value of academic opportunities, achievements, and prestige available through Hindi, these MGDians like those at the other three schools were quick to admit what was lost as students became less-affiliated with Hindi for the sake of English.

“We are moving away from our native language,” said Seema, a 12th Standard MGDian. “Trust me! I’m being frank with you. The problem with us is…the problem with India is that we have that certain level of English, that sense of English speaking in us, but we are completely going away from our native language. We don’t know certain words. OK, I’ll give you a very good example. I can’t read a novel in Hindi. I can’t! Really, you can call me a bookworm, I’m very fond of reading books, but they’re all in English. Maybe because I’ve never been asked to develop that habit in Hindi because of the kind of education we have and Indian students trying to go abroad. So English is encouraged everywhere for us and Hindi, maybe…. I really admire countries like China and Japan which are just sustaining their own culture. What we speak is actually not English and it’s not Hindi. It’s Hinglish! Actually we don’t speak Hindi! Ask us to, you know, converse in Hindi, *just* in Hindi, and we won’t be able to do it.”

A 10th Standard Mayoite described similar experiences, “There are so many pros to English. It obviously plays a really important part in today’s internationalism. And, you know, it is said that by learning English and different languages and different cultures, you get a different

personality. If you compare a person who knows English and another culture and another tradition to government school children, you'll see the difference. They are more like…they don't have the same confidence as English speaking students. Cons, OK, I don't know how to say Hindi numbers. I just know *ek, do, teen, char* [one, two, three, four], until 10 and then I can say 11 but at times I think that, yea, we are making our own language and culture inferior."

Students varyingly identified themselves as existing in mediating positions between or among these languages – of knowing Hinglish but being unable to read, write, or speak "proper" Hindi; of knowing English but a specifically "Indian" form of English or to the detriment of their mother tongue(s); or of knowing an Indian language or dialect but one "othered" by these North Indian Public Schools such as Marwari or Bhojpuri. Their engagement and identification with certain forms of Indian English and Hinglish, languages that looked or sounded different than Englishes abroad, more "classical" forms, or than those of older generations, represented youth linguistic practices of creation, negotiation, and balance. The problem, however, was that while these practices often worked well for these students *socially*, leading them to express excitement and pride over their language play and skills, they were frequently unrecognized or unrewarded by more formal institutions, leading to admissions of inadequacy.

Students' varied abilities in these languages, for example, became a boon, coping device, or crutch in certain academic settings. During a year of upper-school classroom observations, students and teachers utilized either Hindi or English as a language of clarification or instruction depending on the speaker's or audience's mother tongue. While there was a great deal less Hindi-use by teachers and students in the classrooms of Welham, Mayo, and even SKV than at MGD, at all four schools English was commonly used for formal instruction while Hindi became a language of revision, correction, recapitulation, and clarification. Perhaps the single exception

occurred in a Welham Girls' Hindi class where the majority of instruction *and* clarification were delivered in English. Otherwise, Hindi would regularly appear at the end of teachers' statements as, "*thik hai*?" [OK?], "*hai na*?" [isn't that right?], "*thik baat*?" [OK?], or "*samaj main ata hai*?" [Do you understand?]; it sometimes took the place of the second half of a sentence altogether, *e.g.* "And then, have you seen in Gurgaon, *ek pardta hota hai*;" or, most frequently, a teacher would provide an explanation or read a passage in English and then immediately translate it into Hindi. English was utilized to present information, and Hindi to clarify. Similarly, students, particularly at MGD, usually asked questions in Hindi while their statements or arguments came in English. These practices exemplified more than just operationalized Hinglish, but exercises in context-based language choice in academics. Through such methods, teachers and students ensured understanding, a rationalization similar to that discussed in the last chapter for Hindi-medium private tuitions or coaching. Yet while such multilingualism served as a tool of empowerment for some, it also served as a crutch for others, standing for the fact that certain students (or teachers) did not know one or either language well enough. As described by Rhea, a 12th Standard MGDian,

"The cons [of an English-medium education] are that you're bad in Hindi; we don't know our mother-tongue or region-tongue for that matter; pros…good in English. But here, we are dangling between the two – not good in English, not good in Hindi."

What's worse, she went on to describe, is that this *lack* of skill is sometimes flaunted as much as skill itself, becoming a foundation for status and sociality in its own right.

"The problem with us is that we have an attitude of showing off**.** We are too pompous in it and that is a very bad thing, in our English. It's not 'Rog-er Federer;' it's 'Roger Federer,'" Rhea stated, referencing that morning's assembly when a student confidently mispronounced the

tennis star's name. "That's basic sense, no? So you tend to see people flaunting their wrong English. They shouldn't. And Hindi, it's like a status symbol. If you don't know Hindi it's, like, 'Oh, you don't know Hindi? *Bahut-hi Angrezo* [Such an American/English type]….'"

"And that's a bad thing?" I asked.

"According to me," admitted Rhea. According to others it's not."

Still unsure, I attempted to clarify, "But what does it mean to call someone that?"

"It's like…being called an *Angrezo*? It's like a superior status. Oh yes, so good at English but you don't even know Hindi. Your parents don't use it. It's common for people over here. It's like my friend, Priya, her mother doesn't use Hindi and they try to show off."

Other students expressed feeling a certain kind of assumed pressure to speak English and *pretend* they didn't speak Hindi well once they arrived at their Public School. Kiran, an 11th Standard Mayoite detailed her experience, stating,

"When I was in 9th Standard I somehow got the idea that English was a superior language, that if I make mistakes in Hindi I'll be considered better."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Like, a student will say, '*Dhai? Dhai kya hota hai?* [What is *dhai*?] It's one and a half?' But they don't really think that. It's 2:30! They think that by saying, '*Dhai kya hota hai?* [What is *dhai*?],' most of the kids don't know counting in Hindi [so] they think that it makes them look cooler. They are better affiliated with the English language in that way."

By purposefully making mistakes in Hindi, students aimed to embody English language prestige. And among those students who did speak English well, Tanya, another senior MGDian, opined, it was easy to draw the line between those who were skilled but didn't flaunt it and those who did just to claim some academic or social ascendency.

"When you're good at English, you can flaunt, a lot," she said. "You can see it in our school – the girls who speak fluent English, they have this attitude like, 'Yea, we can speak English so shut up.' Yea…they have this attitude."

Surprised, I asked if students indeed said such things to each other.

Tanya thought for a second, "No…you just get that feeling, you know, from the face itself. There are very few girls, like Avani, who don't show off; but in our Class, look at Ishita, the leader, she has this attitude that her English is like…the best."

The scholastic or moral opportunities and prestige thought achievable through language, therefore, were in constant dialogue with student practices of everyday sociality and status among peers. To this end, the next section examines how by only using Hinglish or English in distinct company and/or critiquing the English skills of others, all-girls' Public School students work to create difference and fit-in, evaluating and policing language in-context.

Student Ideologies of Difference & Belonging: Reputation, Criticism, and Context

At the start of Welham Girls' Pre-SC English class one morning, the teacher began by going over prepositions and English nursery rhymes. Eventually, the lesson turned into a larger discussion of pronunciation and enunciation with students slowly repeating back a series of phrases, focusing in on particular sounds. Throughout this process, a few students began to laugh at the drill's sluggish yet purposeful cadence. As the laughter grew more perceptible with every repeated sentence, the teacher finally said,

"Think about how when a student mispronounces something in a presentation, like 'devālopment,' which happened just yesterday in assembly, how we all cringe and we all look at

each other. Think of how important elocutions are – the ability to memorize and *deliver* something in front of an audience."

"Even we make comments if they mispronounce something," added a student.

"Yes," affirmed the teacher, "because you are suggesting that this action is unlike us."

Similar to the young MGDian who corrected her mother's pronunciation in front of the principal, students regularly drew lines between themselves and others through their use and styles of English. They differentiated themselves from their classmates, from students at other schools, between batch years (sometimes referencing generational differences), between themselves and their teachers, and in comparisons with school staff. While studies such as Véronique Benei's (2008) examination of Marathi use in Maharashtrian schools have looked at the ways language is used in India by institutions as a way to establish group identities or "passions" regarding regionalism or nationalism, creating hierarchies of power, influence, and belonging in the process, I found students developed their own ties to language embedded in productions of peer group sociality. These practices were in some ways aligned to but also at odds with institutional framings of linguistic primacy.

As English prowess became increasingly recognized as an MGD "trait" over its early years, students eventually began using the language to set themselves rhetorically apart from others. Sarojini, a member of the 1949 batch, noted that while she did not know a word of English when she first arrived at the school from Karachi this was not a problem as it was common for many of the school's original students. "That's why we were grouped according to level and not age," she explained. Five or so years later, however, Sarojini noticed that this began to change. Many of the same girls that a few years prior did not know any English were soon

found making off-hand comments about a new student's sub-par English skills or putting down those who attended non-English medium schools.

"We were snobs really," she said. "At MGD, we became snobs. Those who were not English medium we called H.M.T.s…you know, those 'Hindi medium types.'"

Certain inflections of English also gained meaning, with students taking on the policing of accents, word choice, and style as well.

"Everyone tried to copy Miss Lutter's English, that British English," explained Sarojini. "We were known for that. And so, you might *know* English, but you still do not really belong if you speak it improperly."

She went on to describe that while others who didn't know English any better might have been impressed, those who did, like MGDians of the time, would comment on how such "mispronunciation," or "that Indian inflection" as she put it, was seen as proof of poser-ship. Today at MGD the role of English in this way has largely changed, yet at a few of the other schools there are instances where such messages linger.

One night after a dinner at Mayo Girls', for instance, I was walking back to the Houses with a group of Class 11 students. Ekta was telling a story. At one point, another student, Kritika, interrupted, bringing attention to Ekta's pronunciation of a word. This started a wave of jokes making fun of their batchmate's accent.

"Listen to the R-sound," Kritika said to me, laughingly explaining, "She's from Gujarat."

Ekta looked annoyed, "OK, so what? That's it."

"We have to tell you otherwise what will other people think when they hear you speak?" said Kritika.

A few others started doing impressions of Etka's style of speech, taking turns offering a new example and then falling into laughter. Ekta shook her head, pursing her lips with amused irritation and then said,

"To me they do this all the time, acting like I'm over-emphasizing this accent. It's not as though I'm doing it on purpose!" She turned to her friends, hitting one on the arm who was in the midst of another impression adding, "It's subconscious! It's just what comes out!"

Students regularly policed each other within the walls of their own institution and among their peers at that. In this particular case, Kritika points to the opinions of external audiences as reason to speak a certain way, claiming negative judgements will follow Ekta if she speaks with her particular accent.

Students also spent a great deal of time comparing language use and skills *across* all-girls' Public Schools as markers of class, likeness, or snobbery. Interestingly, Ekta was one such student who regularly made comparisons between Mayo Girls' and MGD in terms of how "rustic" the latter school was because MGDians not only spoke Hindi but also used local dialects and "abuses." It was later that week, for example, during some down time between classes that we were chatting with a few of her batchmates in the back of a Commerce classroom and I mentioned living on MGD's campus.

"…really?" Ekta asked while making a disgusted face. "MGD is so rustic. I mean, *we* speak in English to our friends."

"So? What does that mean?" I asked.

"Meaning they don't speak English," she answered. "Have you heard them speak? All in Hindi, they abuse, their behavior…it's bad. They use slang in Hindi. They don't even complete their sentences. Class-less."

"So English is automatically a marker of class?" I tried to find out. "Or can Hindi be too if it's spoken in a certain way?"

"Uhm…sort of in today's society," she said, affirming these assertions. "You'll notice at events that MGDians and SKVians get together….SKVians use a lot of Hindi also, right? …whereas Mayo and Welham get along."

In this fashion, though Ekta is occasionally made a partial outsider by some of her own classmates based on her accented English, she then uses inter-school comparisons to place herself back ahead of the likes of MGDians, who speak not only Hindi but, in her opinion, a "classless" type of Hindi, filled with abuses, slang, and poor sentence structure. Relatedly, MGDians frequently called Mayoites snobs, identifying the latter's use of English as merely a way to show off and claim false status. However, as put forth by Ekta, these relationships to English or Hindi among peers did often reflect closer relationships experienced among students of schools with similar language practices. The influence of peers in variously determining what's cool, what qualifies as showing off, what establishes formality or familiarity, and in what contexts was evident.

For students like Shivangi and Rohini, for instance, who switched between a variety of all-girls' Public Schools or transferred over from another "type" of institution such as a convent school, there was a process to learning which languages or styles were acceptable among their new group of peers.

"Certain things are given different importance," offered Shivangi. "Like, at Welham for instance, English. Or in SKV what language you spoke mattered. The Welham girls would come up saying, 'Hey *guys*. What are you doing *guys*?' They just referred to each other in passing as 'guys' whereas the Scindians would be Hindi speaking and didn't really give that much

importance to addressing everybody in English. So it's that whole dynamic, I guess. It just differs as a school what you give relevance to. And it did take some time when I switched to figure the differences…to talk correctly."

Or, as described by Rohini, "When I joined SKV my English was better than the people who were already here because I had been in a convent school and all that…and I always had an image of always conversing in English in classes but coming back home I always used to speak Hindi with my parents. So here when I joined the school I used to converse in English but among friends it was like people used to converse in Hindi because if you're in a group and you speak English *there* people would feel, is she trying to show off and all that? Yea, so that was the experience which I got in my first few days so I shifted to Hindi. But, it takes time and my group was also a newcomers group so with them I used to converse in English and gradually we shifted to Hindi because the environment is like that. But then when we converse with teachers we generally converse in English, like 99% of the time it's in English and sometimes in Hindi, whereas in hostels it's like 50% English, 50% Hindi. And now it's become Hinglish."

Situational and interpersonal meanings were established behind each language in ways that influenced the "type of talk" with which students engaged. This extended to a point where students even deemed specific languages more appropriate or suitable for particular audiences or for discussing particular subjects or topics. As Rohini continued to detail,

"You know, there's no such venue where you can speak English or you can speak Hindi, but it depends on the type of talk we are doing. If it is very friendly and very informal then we gradually shift to Hinglish, but then if you're talking about something and we're talking about say, politics, and it's about debating and discussion and everything then it's always in English. But, if you're talking about something very informal or we're discussing a personal situation

with our friends or even with our teachers then, you know, our mother languages becomes more comfortable and expressive. So that is where we start using Hindi."

Students, particularly at MGD and SKV, frequently noted that English was used to signal formality or "learnedness," hence why presentations or introductions to new people or dignitaries were conducted in this language, while familiarity, relatability, or frankness were signaled by Hindi (or another Indian vernacular).[85] As one 11th Standard MGDian put it,

"Basically, English and Hindi, these two languages have evolved to epitomize whether I'm being formal with you or familiar."

Unlike at Mayo and Welham, peers at these schools would at times call each other out for speaking in English within the hostels, for being overly "formal." Rohini as an SKVian explained this dynamic by saying,

"It's not *always* like that but, yea, it's like if everyone is having simple rice and you come with decorated bread and you start having it then it becomes that you're showing off. If everybody is sitting and conversing in Hindi and it's a group of ten girls and *everyone* is speaking in Hindi and then you start blabbering in English they would say, why the hell are you doing that? Sometimes people will shift gradually to English to comfort me or sometimes people would say *ki* [that], 'Rohini, we are conversing in Hindi you can be comfortable with us.' So this is the thing."

Nabila, a 12th Standard MGDian, similarly explained the balance and meanings behind these languages, of how situation or audience dictated whether English was read as an appropriate display of status and education or as showing off among peers. "I think English is there for more official proceedings, like if you're at an assembly or if you're talking to someone

[85] Though, there were many students who stated that formal, subject-based conversations frequently happened in English simply because it was more likely that students knew more technical words in English than in their Sanskritized Hindi forms.

who's visiting…like other delegations…you will speak in English because English has that tag attached to it like, 'Oh, you're such a fluent English speaker, you must be really intelligent or really good or you must come from a really good school.' But when you're talking to each other, it's generally in Hindi because you don't want to come across as this English-speaking snob, you know? You don't want people to say, 'Oh, look at her, she's got all of her accents on.' Yea, so, that's what the difference is. They're both languages that we value. They're both languages that we will use. But we use them in different situations."

In terms of these dependent conditions, many students expressed a level of fun, identity, or closeness experienced when speaking their native language among friends, particularly when using things like abuses. Almost in response to those Mayoites who suggested MGDians were "classless" for speaking Hindi abuses, Kanupriya of her own accord explained why she personally liked speaking to her peers in Hindi for this very reason,

"Person to person it depends. I feel comfortable in both. I think most of the students here *would* prefer to speak in Hindi if it came down to it. Uhm, for example, sometimes when we are talking, I abuse a lot. I'm honest. I abuse," she said, laughing. "I do. Fact is some of the abuses don't work in English. So if we're eating brunch and I say, '*Kitne gande hai!* [How dirty!],' [someone might say,] '*Yar, Hindi mein galiyan mat boliye!* [Jeez, don't say abuses in Hindi!],' and I'm like why? Why shouldn't I abuse in Hindi? And they say that it sounds so dirty. When you want to abuse, you enjoy it only when you're doing it in your native language! If you go to the core of it, though, girls want to speak in Hindi."

With that said, MGDians as much as Mayoites still patrolled the English skills of others, particularly in differentiating themselves from lower-level school staff and select teachers. In most cases House Matrons and, in almost all cases, *bai jis* did not speak English or at least not

nearly as well as the students. It was not uncommon, then, to see students, especially senior boarders, taking some advantage of this, speaking their frustrations under their breath in English or even poking fun at them in their very presence, knowing they wouldn't understand. Sitting with a group of Mayoites in their dorm as they worked to make a bake-less, "Best of Luck" fudge cake for their House's Board-taking juniors, for example, I observed a *bai ji* ask the students in Hindi for one of the pots back so she could serve the evening tea.

"How funny is it that she thinks she can use this?" joked Meghna to the others sitting in the circle, still stirring the sludge-like mixture in her pot as the *bai ji* looked on.

"Just give her something otherwise she won't shut up," advised another.

Meghna scoffed, "Yea, she was asking me what we are making. *Mene kaha,* '*Bai ji,* fudge!' [I said, '*Bai ji*, fudge!]' Sensing she was still behind her waiting, Meghna then turned around and said again, "*Bai ji,* fudge!"

"*Kya?* [What?]" responded the *bai ji*, still not understanding.

"Fudddggge!" all the girls boomed in unison and then broke into laughter.

"*Kya?* [What?]"

The students continued to laugh, some rolling their eyes with exasperation, while the *bai ji* simply walked out of the dorm appearing confused and frustrated.

Though students at all four schools would explain that it was simply the bad eggs that took advantage or treated the staff poorly at such extremes, expressing how a number of *bai jis* were like family to them in the hostels, English was something frequently employed in more innocuous if not subtle ways to talk around or about them in their presence.

Teachers were also a common target for critique. Many times, students' evaluations of their teaching were connected to determinations of their English skills. With a few exceptions, it

was rare for students to identify teachers with poorer English skills as one of their better teachers. Instead, many times students would use these linguistic shortcomings to qualify their skills or as a focus of critique. During one such instance in an 11th Standard Math class at Mayo Girls', the teacher was reading aloud from the textbook, discussing permutations when she said,

"So class, what would be the 'advauntages' of that?"

There was a murmur of laughter around the room as the two students directly in front of me turned to each other and simultaneously said in a hushed yet excited voice, "Ad-vaun-ta-ges?" mimicking the teacher's mispronunciation.

"Where is she even from?" commented one of the students, giggling.

The other student turned around to me and whispered, "Yesterday she said 'sap-a-rated' instead of separated."

"Yes!" exclaimed the first student at the memory – "'You sap-a-rate the permutations.' Come on!"

In a different 11th Standard English class a few days later, another teacher was reading a passage from *The Merchant of Venice*, when one student corrected the teacher's pronunciation and then asked to read the rest of the passage to the class. My desk mate leaned over and said,

"Half the time we have to teach *her* English."

And later on in the day, Ekta made it a point to inform me that the teacher had passed out from MGD, an effort, perhaps, to prove her earlier claims of institutional "rustication."

However, such appraisals of teachers occurred at MGD as well. During a 12th Standard Economics class, for example, the teacher spent the majority of the time instructing in English while clarifying and answering questions in Hindi, a practice I had now come to expect in most classrooms. Walking out of the room at the close of the lesson, a group of girls came up after me.

"So what did you think of the class?" asked one of the students.

"It was nice," I offered.

"Yea, but what about her English?" probed another.

The students then proceeded to critique the teacher's single spelling error written on the board, her accent, and the grammar mistakes made while speaking to the class. The fact that these students chose to speak *in Hindi* while critiquing their teacher's English was, indeed, seemingly paradoxical if not an example of their use of Hindi to express frankness.

Whether students used English or Hindi among their peers and the reasons given for it, be it because of their backgrounds, their comfort with certain languages, the different school histories or character, or the academic ascendancy given one language over the other, the rules of sociality established among students themselves were palpably influential, whereby belonging and difference were verified or denied through language and style.

This was further exemplified in a conversation with a Class 10 Mayo Girls' student when considering the alternative linguistic practices of their male counterparts at the boys' school across the street.

"Mayo Boys tend to talk with each other in Hindi. Even though they act properly when talking to teachers," she proffered.

"So why do you think you all speak English to each other all the time?" I inquired.

"Because some of us are from UP [Uttar Pradesh] or wherever and our Hindi is not so good. We make mistakes," she volunteered immediately.

I tried to clarify, "So…the boys tend to be more from Hindi-speaking areas?"

"No…they're from the same places as us," the student admitted and then after considering for some time said, "Uhm…I guess it's just cool to speak English here more. Your seniors speak English, so you speak English."

Along the same lines, a 12th Standard Welhamite explained, "My batchmates had a big discussion about why Welham Boys' were speaking Hindi during Cultural Fest when we were sitting together. We were like, guys, we're the ones talking in English. I mean whenever we pass juniors and they're talking in Hindi, it's like, ugh. The word we use for it is '*chi.*' Why does that irritate us? We think it's cool to talk in English, it just comes naturally. But I don't know why boys do this…they're very good at English as well, but in the dorms they're yelling in Hindi!"

Similar to the accounts presented by others in this section, these students recognize the influence (senior) peers have on imbuing language with social meaning on these campuses. However, they also bring up yet another formulation of difference established through language practice in their comparisons with brother schools, one along the lines of gender. Variations in campus culture and determinations of "coolness" considered, alternative narratives were also regularly put forth by students, teachers, and administrators to explain the perceived linguistic differences at play at all-girls' and all-boys' Indian Public Schools. These variously suggested how certain languages or stylized talk could take on assumed gendered qualities or serve as tools for those who experienced lower expectations of status, capability, or education to "prove" themselves. For "teens use language not only to affirm clique boundaries, but also to test the limits of gendered expectations" (Shankar 2008:112).

Gender and Status:
"Proving it" through Language

It was a frequent supposition articulated at all these schools that students spoke "more" Hindi, in general, on all-boys' campuses. While particularly salient in comparisons made between Mayo Girls' or Welham Girls' and their brother schools, narratives suggested that SKVians also utilized more English informally than Scindians, and though MGDians outwardly admitted to speaking more Hindi themselves among peers they too noted that this at times likened them to norms and qualities often attributed to all-boys' schools.

Interlocutors at the all-girls' schools always made it a point to identify the school's "*bhai* [brother] club," or the group of male instructors on campus who always sat, ate, and socialized together, in Hindi. Female teachers would comment on how these instructors tended to be weaker or less comfortable in English, claims commonly supported by observations of their instructional practice or in more informal interactions. These "clubs" of male teachers as well as former assertions of Hindi being used as a language of frankness, joking, and familiarity were then often invoked in explanations of why male students were thought to socialize more in Indian vernaculars. In interviews with administrators and teachers of the all-boys' schools they frequently referenced the difficulties they experienced in getting their students to speak in English at all times. And though male students were sometimes described as having poorer English skills or being less comfortable in the language similar to the evaluations made of many male teachers, most, as described by the Welhamite in the last section, were thought to be just as good at English as the girls or in a few cases, better. This meant that language choice was largely founded on something different than skill – that is, style and perceived situational necessity.

For one, Hindi, "dialects," and certain styles of speaking such as word choice, inflection, sentence structure, or slang were frequently labelled as "masculine" or as a way to express a kind of "machismo." Put by one Welham Girls' student,

"Girls' disputes are more of a war of words whereas boys may approach prestige and coolness from a more physical perspective, from machoisms [sic] like abuses. And those are more readily available in Hindi or Marwari, which also mirror popular film culture."

Here, Hindi, Marwari, and "abusing" are given a corporeal quality. The student suggests that while girls battle for prestige or coolness using "words," understood perhaps as more intellectual competitions in English, boys earn social status through a kind of physical or bodily manliness established in the vernacular. There is also a suggested notion that boys speak "differently," that is, about different topics or in more informal, joking, or "crude" ways, which is thought better-served by Hindi or Marwari. Along these lines, after a tour of the boys' school one day, a Mayo Girls' teacher opined,

"Boys speak in Hindi all the time because of the way they speak or the words they want to use are not available in English. They combine a lot of dialects in their speech like Marwari – they use a difference type of language. Take yesterday, the teacher, an ex-Mayoite, used a number of Marwari words and phrases when joking with some of the boys taking the survey."

Alumni, then, or additional models of masculinity such as those available in film culture offered messages and examples to students linking language to gender and social prestige in specific ways. For example, according to a Scindia Boys' administrator,

"Girls attach more to showing class in their person. They see [English] as a prestigious language. The boys find Hindi macho, like they hear in the movies with Salman Khan. It's not a pure Hindi either."

English, then, as a more or less generalizable sign of class in northern India was at times presented by my informants as having even *greater* bearing or significance for girls and women; while relatedly, using certain vernaculars or styles of speech were often presented as creating dilemmas or disjuncture. In other words, female students encountered moments where they had to mediate or balance displays of class and "appropriate" femininity with linguistic practices deemed "cool" among their peers. While boys could speak certain types of Hindi, Marwari, *tapori* street slang, abuses, etcetera, and largely remain validated in their masculinity, many students at the all-girls' schools expressed being policed when they engaged in similar practices. Recall how some Mayoites critiqued MGDians' use of Hindi as "class-less" or "rustic," how Kanupriya's MGD classmates reprimanded her use of Hindi abuses as "dirty" and shut-down Neha when she spoke Marwari. Or as offered by another MGDian when describing her use of Hindi slang in the hostels,

"We have fun, you know, joking among friends. But then there are those who say, 'God, you sound so manly, yea?' Or 'Speak properly,' 'Be lady-like,' and all that."

Thus, though Hindi was deemed the "cool" languages among most students at MGD, there were those, certain peers or adult others, who identified its use as misaligned to specific class and gender expectations. One Welham Girls' administrator explained such experiences in terms of a varying ability to "break through class differences," saying,

"Boys break through class differences more easily. They can just hang with anyone, you know, have a drink, have a smoke, break through it. I don't know how they do it, but it's a very nice thing. Women are always very conscious about everything, about how am I speaking. And I don't know if it's peculiar to these schools, it's just everywhere a reality. It's as true with any

girl. A lot of the swearing which boys indulge in hits the vernacular. And the girls don't indulge in that as much…and the ones who do really get shouted at. So I think that's how it is."

Where MGDians (and to a lesser degree, SKVians) were therefore more commonly policed or put down for their language practices in these ways, at Mayo and Welham Girls', by establishing English as their language of acceptance and ascendancy, students (re)aligned their peer-based practices of sociality with more generally-held societal expectations, making them less likely to be the subjects of such loss-of-class or -gender narratives placed elsewhere. Mayoites in particular would also comment on how this familiarization of English made it so they were better prepared and more comfortable speaking the language in more formal settings. Students pointed this out particularly at events with their brother schools, claiming the boys tended to emulate them in more "formal" situations.

"Boys are in awe of us because we're a better school," stated Surbhi, a Class 11 Mayo Girls' student. "We speak English very well and all the time. They speak Hindi. But whenever they go out, for a competition or something and we're there, they, well, act differently. They change, act more like us…speaking English and all."

Another Class 12 Mayo Girls' student, however, offered that this was just part and parcel of the pressures girls feel to "prove" their class or education backgrounds more.

"I think we girls are more class conscious or something. We want to show that we've got class. Prove it to each other more. You'll see at our socials that the boys are a little tongue tied because they don't speak English that often, but when they're around us or go off-campus to some competition or something, they have to speak it."

This notion of having to "prove it" was commonly invoked by girls attending all four schools. A sense that English and style of speech were devices across situations that allowed

girls to present status, something many felt they had to overcompensate for in order to just be considered. As put by one Welham Girls' student,

"Men don't have to *prove* their class quite as much. They could speak in Hindi and no one would question whether they have a well-paying job, come from a good family, or were educated as much. Some businesses or deals or politics are even happening better in Hindi. Women, on the other hand, if they speak Hindi, maybe people assume more so that she's just a housewife or isn't overly educated, what have you."

Similarly, when an SKVian was asked why she suggested more English occurred on their campus compared to their brother school's she posited, "Because it's really hard to prove yourself as a girl. You have to try extra hard. You may be on the same level as your real brother, your twin even, but you have to work twice as hard to show that you have the same degree as him, the same qualifications as he has. So you speak in English, to better prove it, to show it."

This connects us back to earlier arguments of English envisioned as a language of empowerment, particularly for girls with ties to (inter)national projects of development. These ideologies are often then mirrored in all-girls' Public Schools themselves, stressing English-use among their students and engaging them in service projects that focus on, for example, teaching *bai jis* literacy in the language. And though English arguably serves as a status marker across gender identities in northern India, female students described their experiences with the language as more a matter of necessity across diverse formal and familiar situations if they wanted to project a certain kind of "class" or "femininity." As such, while outside the scope of this dissertation, this section introduces an important topic of research ripe for further pointed and comparative analysis – that of actual practice *in terms of* these experiences, understandings, and ideologies of gender-based language-use at single-sex (or co-ed) Indian Public Schools.

Concluding Thoughts:
Mediated Multilingualism

In this chapter, we have analyzed the ways languages and their associated ideologies contribute to constructions of educated, classed, gendered, and cool senses of self, solidarity, and difference among Public School female youth. In a multilingual country, an identity established well before colonialism, the methods and contexts of language mediation in order to be successful, to belong, or exclude are evident. What is perhaps most compelling, however, is how similar so many of these narratives of linguistic mediation are to the practices and experiences captured by researchers of second (and third) generation students within the South Asian diaspora. It is here that many have reflected on the occurrences and employment of code-switching, code-mixing, and accents; the role of language socialization and the influence of peer groups; and the experiences of hybridity as well as determinations of authenticity, particularly between "heritage languages" and, say, English. However, I found that this complex cultural negotiation that is so commonly identified as a diasporic occurrence, this "third space," as named by Homi Bhabha (1994) to acknowledge the distinction of diasporic culture in reference to both original and mainstream culture, is also in many ways experienced and practiced by certain students *in country*. This was especially true for girls in North India's (upper-)middle classes; and elite, residential, English-medium Public Schools played a sizable part. Along these lines, students learned, evaluated, identified, and mediated language in terms of context and audience, whether at school, among friends, at home with family members of varying generations or linguistic abilities, in the formal or familiar, in order to produce and project legitimate forms of a successful self. Through certain language practices or play, through the creation of "styles that

defy simple classification" as put by Shankar (2008:7) in her analysis of language-use among Desi youth in the United States, female Public School students in India work to create meaningful social identities, exercises of agency often circumscribed by social or institutional expectations of class and gender.

It is in these circumscriptions of agency that questions arise in identifying these schools as "theaters" of girls' empowerment. The next chapter, therefore, will examine how these institutions take on and develop these narratives; and particularly how female students perform empowerment in terms of differentially experienced and voiced acceptance of such models.

CHAPTER 6

Theaters of Empowerment:
The Performativity of "Empowerment Fatigue," Service, and Choice

The IPSC Cultural Festival is a highly prestigious annual event covered by regional and even national media outlets wherein Public School students compete in various categories of individual and group performance before invited panels of judges that can include accomplished choreographers, dancers, singers, musicians, and Bollywood actors. As a student, being chosen to represent your school and compete in an event is huge; and as a school, winning earns you collective bragging rights for a year over your institutional rivals. In 2013, the theme for the contemporary/lyrical dance competition in choreography was "Be the Change." Sitting among a group of MGDians, I looked on to the giant stage as the lights came down and silence fell upon the cold performing arts center.

A female student's voice suddenly boomed through the space, "To the powerless women, to the ones who lit themselves on fire to light the world with inspiration, have things changed? Woman, a symbol of sacrifice, torture, but also power. We are, shall be, will always be the change. To all the women today, the powerful women…," and then the music came up and it was Beyoncé's "Who run the world? Girls." The student performers entered the stage, dancing their way through symbolic and prop barriers, lifting themselves back up as others threw them down, fighting off those holding them back. The next school's performance began with a voiceover saying, "*Nahin, nahin, nahin ho sakta*" [No, no, it's not possible]. A new father dressed in a suit and tie emerged from behind a white curtain holding a baby. After looking out to the audience with what seemed like disgust, he placed the baby in a trashcan. One of the female dancers held up a sign reading, "I'm a girl child." Over the speakers a voice then said, "The battle begins."

With the music rising, dancers dressed in flowing red outfits portrayed a girl scolded for studying instead of cooking the family's dinner, her parents giving her school books to her younger brother. In the next scene, a cut-out of a Delhi bus flew across the stage. The music paused long enough to hear a woman's scream through the silence as a red *dupatta* was tossed high out of the bus's windows. Finally, the Hindu warrior goddess, Durga, appeared center stage, powerful, with defeated men writhing at her feet. Another school's performance began. A voice came over the speakers and asked, "After 60 years of independence, are women really free? Or are we inferiors? Are we commodities? I am not *that* woman." Then, a similar dance depicting the Delhi bus rape emerged, followed by an honor killing, a portrayal of an unsafe workplace, and gender-based harassment. "I am not that woman," came again over the speakers to signal the end of the performance.

It was at this point that the 11th Standard MGDian sitting next to me said in exasperation, "Why is *everything* about women? Is that really the *only* thing people think needs changing?" With that, MGD's own performance began on stage. "Woman is power. The change is in us, we will bring a change in you," reverberated out of the speakers. I laughingly turned to the student, as she smiled, rolled her eyes, and slouched further into her seat, "Ugh, I'm over it!" The dance went on to show the evolution of female power from Parvati to Durga/Kali.

Like many activities and competitions sponsored by the IPSC, the Cultural Festival contemporary dance event sought to engage students in a project of depicting "an actual and current social ill that needs to be redressed" (IPSC Cultural & Literary Festival Guidebook 2013). The fact that nine of the ten participating schools chose to represent the theme of "Be the Change" though narratives of "the plight of the female child," gender/sex discrimination, and women's empowerment was not, however, overly surprising. Appadurai (1986:358) notes that,

"there is a tendency for places to become showcases for specific issues overtime." These "theoretical handles" or "gatekeeping concepts," he suggests, such as hierarchy in the case of India, have historically worked to set-up gender or caste as *the* way to "knowing" India (*ibid.*:357). The "woman question," as a framework for development, is nothing new. What continues to change, however, is how these discourses are (re)packaged, (re)mobilized, and (re)presented, not only by external sources but by Indian institutions themselves. In many ways, the question, "Why is *everything* about women?" posed by my overly-stimulated audience-mate, probes the very identities and purposes of all-girls' Indian Public Schools, particularly in terms of their ongoing roles as "theaters" of girls' empowerment on the subcontinent.

Anthropologist, Aradhana Sharma notes that "performance…is not simply a development *tool*; rather...development itself is performative and a 'performed practice'" (2008:93, emphasis original). It is through "social dramas" that "development identities, hierarchies, and norms are shaped and challenged, actors are fashioned, and different visions of development and modernity are articulated" (*ibid.*). Recall how India's all-girls' Public Schools served as regional and national showcases for (inter)national audiences in the years leading up to and following independence, as proof of the nation's modernity and progress. This symbolic mobilization continued as the country emerged as a recognized economic power, post-neoliberal reforms in the 1990s, its prominence on the world markets rhetorically undermined by enduring social inequities notably in terms of the condition and treatment of girls and women. International development agencies; Indian national, state, and foreign governments; as well as NGOs began emphasizing programs for girls' empowerment through access to quality education as a solution, at times identifying all-girls' Public Schools as a productive model. It became a global matter of human rights, equal opportunity, and socio-economic development linked to a vocabulary of

neoliberalism, *i.e.* free markets, agency, individualism, and choice. During the time of my fieldwork in 2014, Narendra Modi's Prime Ministerial campaign slogan under the BJP was "*Beti bechao, beti padhao*" ["save the girl child, educate the girl child"]; and a year later following his victory, India's 66th Republic Day was dedicated to *stree shakti* [women's empowerment].

Regularly seen as already empowered and generally privileged, Public Schools and their female students are made symbols for and the leaders of such missions of girls' empowerment writ large, for raising awareness and and creating change. However, I found these assumptions proved complex and at times problematic given: (a) the ever-diversifying family backgrounds of Public School students (*i.e.* in terms of class, caste, regionality, etc.); (b) how international empowerment rhetoric translates in varying Indian contexts (Bajaj 2014); (c) how they support notions of *noblesse oblige* wherein the upper classes don the moral superiority and duty to uplift those deemed lesser-than; and (d) student experiences of discursive oversaturation, or what I've come to call, "empowerment fatigue." Recall how in our introductory chapter a Mayo Girls' student, Sejal, opined, "It's all a show," when referencing the political platforms of Modi for girls' empowerment. These contentions mirror common critiques of development work, both nationally and internationally, as simply performative or "performed practice" (Sharma 2008).

This chapter considers straight-on the ways students are asked to and do variously embody and find meaning in such messages. Here, we will see the performativity of women's empowerment (both staged and otherwise) emerging as a de facto choice for student projects, competitions, essay prompts, and so forth, integrated into how these prestigious private schools enact missions of service and moral citizenship – in how they empower the self *and* see themselves empowering others – and how students enunciate and practice choice. I will examine how many who attend these schools, tasked with becoming leaders and raising awareness about

gender inequality, are growing fatigued and even bored with such projects and narratives, struggling to see past the performative to the tangible, in their abilities to affect change for others, the need to affect change at all, and in determining what empowerment means or may look like for themselves, now and in their decisions for the future.

In varying degrees, I also argue that these narratives of women's empowerment can work as a kind of symbolic violence in-practice, misrecognized by the "hidden persuasion" of domination exerted on female bodies (Bourdieu 1998). For one, by identifying female students of these Public Schools as "already empowered" and ready to empower others, development narratives and projects do a disservice to the diversity of the disempowered experience. In specifying a particular model or recognizing only certain versions of Indian femininity as legitimately "empowered," they are inconsiderate of contextual differences, divergent desires, or alternate models of power, identity, choice, and success, in which other forms are labeled deviant. In another sense, such determined yet arguably arbitrary routes to empowerment contribute to the creation of "docile bodies" (Foucault 1976). By recruiting and mobilizing (upper-)middle class girls as the dispersers of such projects, it suggests a form of empowerment that favors governance. In this way, a duel disempowerment is established wherein empowerment becomes an elite women's practice, embraced as part of their identity, while lower caste/class women are excluded, only to be acted upon. Whereas theatrical performances are commonly employed for symbolic expressions of empowerment, it is often the case that only a "symbolic empowerment" or even "performance violence" is achieved through such moves (Juergensmeyer 2000:191). For some students, there is a misrecognition or misalignment between narratives that name them empowered and their own experiences; for others, an ability to identify with, own, re-name, and enact such messages. While still for others these narratives

are simply moot or contrived. I assert that within these particularly elite school settings it is the very performative aspects of their delivery, practice, and socialization that contribute to their varied effects.

By utilizing theoretical lenses from anthropological studies of performance (Geertz 1973; Goffman 1973; Turner 1982, 1988); feminist studies of performativity (Butler 1999; Kondo 1997); and social scientific works on international development (Appadurai 1986; Bajaj 2014; Iyengar 2010; Kelan 2009; Sharma 2008), elite education, and service (Gaztambide-Fernández and Howard 2013; Gupta 2013), I explore the ways empowerment rhetoric becomes propagated, internalized, mediated, or rejected by these institutions and their students through or despite experiences of performative saturation and perceived tangibility.

Performative Empowerment

Performance can operate as a spectacle, social drama, theatrical realism, everyday practice, ritual, mode of awareness and change, or credential while telling us something about social structure, relationships, norms, order, change, and power (Gluckman 1958). Or as detailed by Sharma (2008: 97-8), rather encompassingly:

> Using the analytics of performance lays bare the worldviews and hierarchies that make up particular social contexts and also reveals how people enact, reflect upon, and contest these worldviews and hierarchies; it helps us to pay attention to the dramatic and agentive aspects of daily life and encounters (Goffman 1973) and everyday practices (de Certeau 1988), and to the staging of social inequalities and conflicts in rituals (Turner 1982, 1988) and play (Geertz 1973). Performances operate not only as mechanisms for the reproduction of social worlds, but also as liminal and 'subjunctive' spaces (Turner 1988) for 'deep play' (Geertz 1973) – that is, performance is an arena with the potential for social transformation and rearticulation. Social dramas, unlike precisely scripted aesthetic dramas, are mutable and less certain in their outcomes (Schechner 1988). Whereas ritual performances are supposed to mitigate social chaos and reinstate the 'natural' order of things, they also signal the constructedness and shakiness of the social order and thus open up room for contestation and reinterpretation (Moore and Myerhoff 1977).

While there are those such as Goffman (1973) who would suggest that *performances* "enact backstage realities on stage as symbolic representations of a signified real" (Sharma 2008:10), others like Butler (1999) argue that *performativity* "delineates how realities are not anterior to stagings but are products or resultant *effects* of repeated stagings" (Sharma 2008:10). In these latter interpretations, performances do not simple represent realities but fabricate them, positioning audiences to "recognize and verify [their] truths" (Diamond 1987:60).

Public School engagement with dramatized messages of women's empowerment through IPSC Cultural Festivals, Annual Day performances, competitions, projects, and beyond are often "structured as reality tours that facilitate first-hand searches for backstage truths" (*ibid.*:114). I argue they can be used to examine how narratives detailing the plight of being female in India compare to how students of these schools experience being "not these woman" or are mobilized to help eradicate the inequitable conditions experienced by "othered" women and communities. For many student informants, actors in and spectators of these social dramas, this ability to recognize and verify these so-called truths was not always so straight-forward. Tensions presented themselves between popular narratives, those acknowledged as legitimate or as having a certain cachet by the school and other institutions, and their own personal understandings. Depending on the individual and the situation, these tensions would take on certain forms, one of which was empowerment fatigue.

Empowerment Fatigue

Exposure to empowerment discourses at these Public Schools begins early. For MGD's Class 3 Annual Day in December, in front of an audience full of eager-looking parents, siblings, teachers, and older schoolmates, eight-year olds performed a series of scenes depicting female

foeticide, the preference for sons in nutrition and schooling, and even domestic abuse. It concluded with a student saying over the microphone in a rehearsed cadence, "It's time to change our mindset and remember the important place of mothers."

"Whoa, that was intense," said Pihu, the 9th Standard MGDian sitting to my left. She had a younger sister in the performance.

"You think?" I asked as the Class 3 students began filing off stage into the audience in search of their families, "How so?"

Scanning the crowd, Pihu said a little distractedly, "I don't know. It's important and everything…but, to *that* extent? It's not like we're in the villages or something." She then spotted her sister and climbed down the row of seats.

Reflecting on her comments, I turned to the primary school teacher sitting to my other side, "It's interesting…," I said, "I'm finding a lot of girls here and at schools like SKV saying that gender inequality and preferences are not a reality anymore, except for in the 'backward' villages…. So why do so many performances about it?"

"Oh, it's there," opined the teacher. "They just don't see it anymore because it's evermore embedded, covert…as a mindset. There are some cases where the upper classes are actually the ones committing these practices *more* as they have the money, the education, the networks, and resources to get it done, even if it's illegal. Some of these girls just live in their own worlds. They don't see it in their own lives…so it must not be there."

Performances such as the Class 3 Annual Day at once normalize these issues while creating an ideological dilemma wherein Public School students simultaneously acknowledge the need for women's empowerment while variously claiming that gender equality has already largely been achieved. These dilemmas created experiences of fatigue. Kelan (2009:199-200), in

her work on gender discrimination in the U.S. and its discursive neutrality in the workplace, describes "gender fatigue" as an outcome wherein individuals, "tired of seeing gender discrimination […,] prefer to see a world that is gender egalitarian, where gender no longer matters" (*ibid.*). Empowerment fatigue, however, does not *deny* the significance of gender or the need for girls' empowerment but responds with comparable boredom, a lack of relatability, or powerlessness, in part, due to oversaturation. MGDians, SKVians, Welhamites, and Mayoites are faced with empowerment rhetoric constantly. As such, empowerment fatigue in these spaces constructs repertoires such as: (a) gender inequality is a reality but, based on my experiences, only in the "backward" villages; (b) gender inequality is a reality but I don't have the power to change anything; and (c) gender inequality is a reality and I can affect change (and feel as though I have a responsibility to do so). In all of these narratives, students often described trouble discerning between the performative and the tangible. At times, the performativity of empowerment fatigue contributed to students (and teachers) describing their school as "a circus," "a performance," "pomp and show," or "a *baraat*" [marriage procession].

Running into three 11th Standard students on the path alongside MGD's main building one morning, for example, I asked why they weren't in class. They stated that they were off to rehearse their dance for the up-coming IPSC Cultural Festival. As they continued to walk on, Sajida turned around and added playfully,

"Oh, you thought this was a school? So you haven't figured it out yet? For people like us, it's this. You know, activities, travel, friends, performances…it's a stage!" At this she raised up her arm in dramatic fashion much to her batchmates' amusement.

On another occasion, the primary school was putting on a Teachers Day performance in the lower school courtyard. The show entailed girls acting out famous teacher-student pairs, with

speeches emphasizing the empowering role of the *guru*. Though, only students from the younger classes were invited to watch, the stage butted up against the back of the senior Science building, enticing many11th and 12th Standard students within their class to hang out their windows to see the happenings below. Watching as I clicked photos of these acrobatic audience members, an 8th Standard student sidled up to me gesturing to the windows and said,

"What do you expect, eh? Life here…is a drama, for sure. Even if we've seen such things, these messages, a hundred and ten times, we'll watch…. It's a distraction."

In these instances, students recognized the regularity of such performances and their subject matter. While in this example, the regularity is appreciated by those looking for "a distraction," in others it elicited feelings of monotony or disenchantment. Take this interaction with Faiza, a 12th Standard MGDian, months later:

"So, how was it?" I asked as she emerged from the Science building following her Pre-Board English exam.

"Eh…boring, actually," she responded. "You know, same old prompt that I've written a million times. Write something about the plight of the female child and such…blah, blah, whatever. It's the normal list. I finished *way* before time was even up."

For many, such activities and exercises have also become performative in the sense that they have lost degrees of their meaning and intentionality. On one hand, there is less a felt-need for critical engagement since as topics recurrently considered and represented, many see the answers, key points, and examples as old-hat. Then there were those who asked – a discussion to what end; for what purpose? In lacking seemingly tangible end goals, many of these prompts, thematic pursuits, and dramas ended up simply representing an expectation – that those who attend elite schools be aware of and able to engage in these discourses.

The Prestige and Making of a Performance

As schools attentive to providing an all-round education leading to the acquisition of elite skill sets and portfolio-boosting credentials, classroom essays, projects, all-school assemblies, inter-house and school competitions repeatedly revolved around topics of gender discrimination and women's empowerment. Students themselves habitually chose women's issues to discuss or portray in judged competitions and public performances. They were regularized and legitimized as topics "elite" in nature.

Later in the year, a group of Class XII Commerce students at MGD asked me if I would proofread their project proposal for a government-sponsored, inter-school technology competition. For this they had to identify a social ill and then design a business plan and tech-tool to tackle it. The students wanted to address the discomfort girls felt traveling in public and so designed a "women's safety alert," a cell phone application that used GPS as well as personal and emergency contacts to map your location and send immediate messages. I asked the student tasked with the app's design why they chose women's safety as their focus.

"Well," she responded, "since the Delhi bus rape this has become a pretty big issue here...girls' safety and all. Judges will probably like it."

On another occasion, during MGD's Annual Day function, I was walking around the club showcase situated on the outdoor basketball courts with the event's judge. At the Interact club's booth, she asked the student representative standing in front of the tri-fold posters and photographs what the club worked on previously. In response, the student confidently mentioned how a few years ago they worked on a project for polio.

"So what's a new project you think you could focus on?" the chief guest asked.

After a pause during which the student became visibly nervous she answered unsurely, "Uhm…the female child, I guess?"

The chief guest smiled and nodded approvingly, moving on to the next club's display, a look of relief evident on the student's face.

And a few months earlier, sitting among a group of students brainstorming over their approach to an up-coming, inter-school *nukkud-natak* [street play] competition, a dramatic form that commonly focuses on issues of social awareness through narration and group response, the theme this time being "Toward the Future," I watched as they eventually arrived at the "obvious" topical choice.

"What about corruption or technology-use or something?" suggested Teena.

Jasmine, another student, quickly responded, "No, let's do eve-teasing [street harassment], yea? That will be better."

"No," Teena whined and then pouted.

Trying to calm the situation, a third student, Apoorva, rationalized, "No. Listen. We can combine it, right? Corruption *in terms* of how women are dealt with when they report it to the police…gender discrimination and all."

"But, that's common," argued Teena. "Everyone's going to be doing that – women's empowerment, not wanting the girl child…. Technology!"

"But they like those," reasoned Jasmine, "and, it'll be easier. OK, I get to be the *policewala*, though, *na*?" she stated decidedly, signaling the end of the debate.

In these conversations, students speak to how specific subject matter, though commonly (over)done, is regularly deemed more appropriate, of value, or legitimate, as topics timely or "elite" in nature, by those in positions of power. Though issues like corruption or technology-use

are indeed significant for discussion as well, past experiences have shown that they do not always carry the same weight, ideologically or performatively, as issues of women's empowerment or gender-based violence. And it's not that students necessarily found these topics more or less pertinent to portray, but considered them *easier* and more likely to garner commendation.

In India, the performance genre of *nukkud-natak* is itself known as a common tool for expressing and representing various social ills. It works to bring in the audience through call and response, breeding collective emotions, and offering some kind of moral lesson at the end. It is also most commonly performed in the vernacular. NGOs have at times attempted to utilize such plays to raise awareness in rural areas concerning girls' rights, health, education, and so forth, seen as more relatable and entertaining forms of information (Sharma 2008). For the most part, Public School *nuttud-nataks* were only performed for (inter-)school, state, or national competitions, conferences, or exhibitions, their audience usually other well-off peers, put on mainly for the purpose of winning various accolades. There were also occasions where they were put on at social events connected to (inter-)school service trips and exchanges, again for a similar audience. With that said, there was one occasion where I accompanied a group of 11th Standard MGDians, which happened to include Teena, Jasmine, and Apoorva, on a service trip to a nearby village in Rajasthan where we visited a school. Though not the purpose of the trip, these girls were eventually asked to perform their *nukkud-natak* for the children and teachers of the school. After the performance was over and met with applause, I went over to offer my congratulations, clapping Jasmine on the shoulder.

"Oh my god," she laughed, "so nerve-racking!"

"Yea," I sympathized, "but you did well!"

"Sure," said Teena. "That's the point. But it's all for a show…too high-minded and all. Who knows what is taken from it," she added, nodding her head toward the rows of students seated cross-legged on the courtyard's floor.

Experiences of fatigue, boredom, and utilitarianism by a number of female Public School students in terms of girls' empowerment, its need and effects, therefore, contribute to another expectation of many elite institutions – that those who attend such schools cultivate a sense of moral citizenship and leadership through service, empowering the self by empowering others. It is in Public School requirements and programs for volunteer work that similar questions arise in terms of the performative and the tangible, or making empowerment solely an upper-class practice or encounter.

Service:
Moral Citizenship and the "Costs" of Empowering Others

The role of elite individuals (and institutions) in bringing awareness to certain issues, spreading social messages, and then encouraging action through performance is well-recognized. In feudal India, much of the role of princely families fell to these philanthropic ventures – opening schools and universities, establishing hospitals, supporting traditional forms of art, music, and dance, refurbishing temples, and so forth. MGD and SKV stood as prime examples of these feudal missions where royal lands and funds were donated to provide a service for upper-caste girls; and, along with Welham Girls,' a curriculum of service was quickly integrated to socialize students into such work. These curricula were influenced by a number of ideologies including that of a Gandhian/Hindu-centric nationalism which also espoused philosophies of hard work and service and those of their founding British headmistresses, often guided by

Christian principles of service to the poor and related pedagogies found in British schools. Miss Linnell, to recall, combined Christian and Sanskritic lessons when determining Welham Girls' school motto to be, "*Aarta shanti phala vidya*," or "the fulfillment of education is to bring peace [to the suffering]."

Today, the IPSC as well as its various associated school Boards have instated formal requirements for service and work through academic subjects, co-curriculars, (inter)national partnerships, and other extracurricular activities. These programs seek to build character, provide training in community leadership, promote an embedded kind of global education and exchange, and inculcate in students a sense of moral duty to help others. However, they also support structures that keep service an elite practice or "hobby," a moral privilege, as such curricula largely takes place at more expensive private schools and participation comes with high price tags. This prestige factor, then, ends up lending itself to the performative, where it often becomes more about the self than about providing a tangible or lasting service to others, more about furthering social networks and boosting resumes. And, what's more, many service programs also entail *actual* dramatic performances as part of their agendas.

Service as a Public School Requirement

For Welham and Mayo Girls', under the ICSE syllabi, this program takes form as Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW) and Community Service. First introduced into Indian school curricula in 1977 following the recommendations of the Kothari Education Commission (1964-66), SUPW emphasizes the principle that education should be work-centered, modeled after Gandhi's philosophy of "Basic Education" or *Nai Talim*. Influenced by his time in South Africa as well as his interactions with colonialism and the English educational system, Gandhi

believed that Indian children were becoming alienated from their roots through the dominance of "career-based thinking." He saw this as having a series of negative effects: a disdain for manual work, the emergence of a new elite, and the growing troubles caused by industrialization and urbanization. According to his 1951 treatise on the topic, education in his mind should instead involve "the moral development of the person" through a lifelong, social, and holistic process.[86] Founded in this desire to move away from upper-caste and colonial models of education, then, it is somewhat ironic that later iterations of Gandhi's vision, emerging through programs like SUPW, ended up having such strong ties to India's Public Schools. Today, SUPW is compulsory from Classes 4-7 and optional from Classes 9-12 as a co-curricular in which students earn certificates and grades. In order to earn these credits, students must spend 150 hours per year on SUPW, half to qualifying "life skills" (*i.e.* dance, Hindustani music, Western music, art, craft, needlework, nature club, robotics, home science, or library activities) and half to "community service."

At Mayo Girls' in 2015, community service programs included a village adopted by the school in 2000 where they started a Hatali Craft Workshop as an income-generating scheme for rural women and an endorsement of "inclusive education" through programs established at mentally challenged and hearing impaired schools. Students can also earn hours by helping organize and manage school festivals, functions, celebrations, and exhibitions, by running the school canteen or tuck shop, maintaining bulletin boards, decorating the school on special occasions, or by participating in the government's literacy mission by teaching the school's support staff how to read and write. Mayo Girls' students have also participated in disaster relief

[86] Based in part off his alternative view of social order, Basic Education was an embodiment of his perception of an ideal society consisting of small, self-reliant communities with his ideal citizen being an industrious, self-respecting, and generous individual living in a small cooperative community. It also envisioned a different role for the teacher, as Gandhi believed learning to take place through dialogue – "the teacher and student must regard the other as fellow worker."

after the Gujarat earthquake in 2002-3 and the Tamil Nadu tsunami in 2005-6. For Welham Girls', which participates in similar SUPW activities such as volunteering at a Mother Theresa orphanage, at physically and mentally handicapped homes, and at a home for the elderly, community service is considered "a natural extension of the school routine" as "every Wednesday afternoon is dedicated to working with the community [they] belong to" (Welham Girls' website). They too connect this dedication to the concept of "*shramdaan*" or "service by labor." On the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, an annual national festival celebrating the birth of Gandhi, the entire student body and the school's teachers replace the support staff to carry out their chores, from cleaning to sweeping to cooking and washing for the entire day.

In comparison, though one could argue that elements of the CBSE's CCE pattern, such as its co-relation to real-life situations, project requirements, and club activities, as well as its Work-Centered Education (WCE) program rolled out in 2004,[87] lend themselves to service and work, the CBSE does not exactly have the same relation as ICSE schools with SUPW or IB schools with their Community Activity and Service (CAS) program. That said, as current-CBSE schools, MGD and SKV not only have strong histories of service and mission statements showing a dedication to this work, but encourage students to participate in a number of service programs, clubs, and activities throughout the year. SKV, for instance, performs a similar tradition of service on Gandhi Jayanti that involves making a special lunch for the school's support staff. They have also adopted nearby villages and run a program called "Sankalp," a resolution to "help women live with dignity" by improving women's hygiene, boosting the quality and use of indigenous machines, providing jobs in an entrepreneurial venture, and

[87] WCE was envisioned to have six "implications": (1) the purpose of education would be the development of the student as a whole; (2) the student would be free to choose what/how to learn; (3) the child's experience is a cultural element of education; (4) individual experience, expression and creativity is encouraged; (5) though all children are equal, they are not the same; and (6) teachers provide conducive, appropriate and rich environments for learning (CBSE 2013. "Cenbosec" 52(2), Apr-Jun 2013).

supporting national and regional needs for gender-sensitization. In short, Sankalp provides a way to supply sanitary napkins to underprivileged women in two villages outside Gwalior at a third of the cost of commercial products.[88] These projects and others speak to SKV's belief that in order "to develop [a] sense of dignity of labor and […] experience their responsibilities towards society, pupils [must be] encouraged to undertake social service activities in school and through Round Square projects" (SKV webpage, "Other Activities").

The Sankalp initiative itself began as a Round Square (RS) project. Round Square International is a not-for-profit membership network of over 150 "like-minded" schools in 40 countries that promotes six "IDEALS" – internationalism, democracy, environmental stewardship, adventure, leadership, and service. Through a belief in the benefits of "experiential learning," Round Square works through collaborative, inter-school initiatives at the local, regional, and international level by way of (1) "service projects that connect students directly with communities where their hard work as volunteers can be of real and practical benefit;" (2) "student-led conferences that celebrate diversity;" (3) "student and teacher visits and exchanges;" and (4) "training and professional development for teaching staff" (roundsquare.org, "How we do it"). On their webpage, Mayo Girls' listed my visits as a "teacher exchange," evidence of their dedication to "internationalism." Belonging to the Round Square conference, like similar programs in which these private schools participate, is a prestigious tag. It shows a dedication to this type of work, but for the institutions that host these projects and for the students and teachers "chosen" to participate it comes with a cost. Welham Girls' does not participate in Round Square in large part because of this reason.

[88] This project utilizes a machine designed by A. Muruganatham of Tamil Nadu which uses bio-degradable materials like banana fiber to make low-cost sanitary napkins and can be run by students and women in these villages through minimal effort (SKV website, "SKV Sankalp").

The Costs and Social Capital of Service

"It's just an excuse for affluent students to hang out," opined one Welham teacher. She explained that Round Square events are so expensive that "many of the students you'd want to participate can't while others that you might not want involved sign-up." For her, issues of project type and site location also raised questions of purpose – "If you want to do service there's plenty to do right her."

The school's principal further explained this shared institutional perspective by stating, "We have a philosophy that we try not to base anything, any decision, on the importance of financing it, now, particularly when it is to do with students. Whenever there's a Round Square and an international conference, you're led to pick the students who are willing to pay for it. And if the aim of the Round Square is ostensibly community service, our school believes that you don't even need to go out of the school gate in India for opportunities…. I mean, if you really want it. So if we want to spend that money…let's say it costs the school for the principal to be jaunting around the world to South Africa or two teachers going, then we might as well spend that money on fixing the road outside. So somewhere or the other the whole thing hasn't gelled with the thinking of our school. What is the need to spend a lot of money to go and say build a school in Ethiopia when this country has *nothing*? You just need to climb the wall next door to see [that] the next village over has nothing. And I'm not saying that we as a school are managing to do too much, but one way that we are different from a lot of the older Public Schools is that we are not well endowed. We didn't begin with endowments and we've never received any. And we don't go to our alumnae with a begging bowl. We make due. And we still can say whatever we can save we put into community service…we just use it for whatever we can close by."

While schools will put up the costs of teacher chaperones to attend, students (or their families) are largely responsible for covering their own expenses. For international trips, like those to Singapore, Bhutan, Abu Dhabi, Germany, the U.S., South Africa, etc., students explained that costs could range from approximately Rs 50,000 to 100,000 (about 750 to 1,500 USD) while those nationally can range from Rs 8,000 to 20,000 (about 120 to 300 USD), depending on the host institution, activities planned, and length of stay which is usually between three to seven days. As suggested by the Welham principal and teacher quoted above, costs are not only prohibitive for schools without an endowment but also undermine the purpose of service education by limiting who gets to participate to only those who can pay.

And though Welham Girls' may not participate in Round Square specifically, it does participate in similar programs such as the International Award for Young People (IAYP).[89] Here, students can achieve bronze, silver, or gold awards for participating in four mandatory sections – service, adventurous journey, skill, and physical recreation. The program was introduced in India in 1962 with "a view to encourage young people in the country to achieve their full growth potential within the framework of Indian society, to improve their moral, social, and intellectual well-being" and was taken up by the IPSC in 1966 as "a balanced, non-competitive programme of voluntary activities which encouraged personal discovery and growth, self-reliance, perseverance, responsibility to themselves and service to their community" (IAYP, India website).

Membership to and participation in organizations such as Round Square, IAYP, and others like the Global Education and Leadership Foundation (tGELF), British Council, Indian

[89] First introduced in the U.K. in 1956 as the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, IAYP was imagined as a way to "motivate young people between the ages of 14 to 25 years to become involved in a balanced programme of voluntary self-development activities to take them through the potentially difficult period between adolescence and adulthood" (IAYP, India Handbook 2006: 8).

Model United Nations (UN), and so on, as well as annual IPSC- and school-sponsored "educational tours," exchange programs, field visits, camps, treks, and internships, often coined as "outreach" or "outward bound" initiatives, not only provide students with diverse (inter)national opportunities, contacts, and credentials but afford schools (inter)national visibility since students travel in their uniforms and events are frequently captured by the media. The high costs of these activities were primarily due to the travel involved and other attending "cultural" or "social" aspects on the program's agenda, often the most coveted aspects of these events. When I was leaving for Welham Girls', for example, a few teachers at MGD mentioned that they too were heading up to Dehradun for a Round Square conference hosted at the neighboring Doon School. They were particularly excited about the white-water rafting "cultural" aspect of the event. I therefore decided to use this as an opportunity to visit the boys' campus and ask the Headmaster his perspective on Public Schools and their role in service education. In our conversation, he also mentioned tensions existing between the school's identity, their service philosophy, and these programs, stating,

"I'm actually considered a bit of a crank in the Round Square movement because if I go to one more 'conference,' a talk-shop, and I see one more video where there are a bunch of kids wearing baseball caps and they're going around like this, and this, and this," he made a series of photo poses with peace sign and other campy gestures, "with vaguely picturesque poor people in the background to this groupy, Western pop music, you know, 'I love the world, oh yes, I do,' I'll start feeling psychotic."

Yet, as mentioned, for many students (and teachers), an added bonus or sometimes main motivation for attending these programs was the tags – the pins, badges, status of being "chosen," credentials – and opportunities to travel off-campus. During such events they could

have fun, socialize, see new parts of the country or world, and then advertise their experiences on social media. Closing nights, in particular, not only offered students an opportunity to dress out of uniform but encapsulated the performative aspects of these programs – the viewing of photos and videos, opportunities for each school to present a dance, song, or drama depicting their school's culture or history, that of their region or country, or the event's theme. It was not uncommon for many of these performances, especially those related to school culture and event theme, to revolve around representations of women's empowerment, even when their relationship to the event's theme seemed tenuous. For example, at the closing ceremony of a Young Round Square hosted at SKV where the theme was "Small Acts, Big Impacts!," involving 14 schools from South Asia and the Gulf region, SKVians put on a dance depicted the goddesses Durga and Kali. Their performance ended with a student proclaiming, "Durga/Kali is in every woman, you just have to rediscover her."

Sitting in all-girls' school dorms throughout the year as students packed for MUN conferences, Round Squares, IPSC happenings, and inter-school competitions, I observed how students with few exceptions spent more time deliberating over what clothes to bring and coordinating the passing of "chits" or notes to students from other schools than to discussing the *formally* proposed purposes of the trip. I observed many even use previous trips off-campus where they were presented with free time to shop for outfits they planned to wear at forthcoming events. Pointing this out to a Mayoite over dinner one evening, she said,

"Some of these girls treat it as a fashion show instead of an MUN. And most of the chit passing during the procedures…they're all mostly between girls and boys…you know, 'motions for entertainment,'" she added chuckling.

An MGDian comparatively explained the various motivations among students to attend events such as Round Square, stating, “I mean, I’m really interested in the project…but, if you talk to most of my batchmates, those who are going…they’ll tell you it’s about the travel, seeing boys, clicking pics…maybe the cultural night at the end. That’s why they go.”

Yet, one could argue that this is all to be expected, simply adolescents being adolescents, or that they are engaging in different aspects of education, ones social and just as important, especially at single-sex schools. As portrayed by an 11th Standard Mayoite,

“It’s about networks, exchange of information, the cultural night, organized trips to cultural and regional sites like the *durgah* and Pushkar…about learning how to carry yourself in such attire, so I know how to walk in heels without falling over or leaning on my friend,” she laughed, “knowing what to wear and what not to wear, practice for possible future roles in the corporate world or within government posts, and interact[ing] with others from different places. Then we can continue the relationship online through like Facebook, or SMS, WhatsApp, GChat, whatever. Hey, it’s India, after all,” she said with amusement. “You saw how the teachers stare and police us at the dance as soon as it gets good. You have to find clever ways to keep in touch. So, it’s not just a debate, or a service project, it’s an *Experience*, capital ‘E.’”

The aims of these programs, the ways they are defined, interpreted, assessed, and practiced, offer points of analysis for how Public Schools and their students may serve as symbols or exemplars of empowerment. Aside from the coveted social networks or cultural capital thought achievable, it was in notions of betterment and citizenship that debates often arose over whether the focus of such service should be on the self or the on other, and whether one was more or less possible or performative by nature.

Deliberations of Purpose: the "Me" and the "We"

At Welham Girls', there was a teacher who frequently mentioned the pride the school took in alumnae who entered fields of service after graduation. Upon our first meeting I brought up the fact that Bollywood actress, Karina Kapoor, had graduated from the school. Her response,

"Blah, forget her," she said, waving her hand in the air. "We have far more interesting people who went here…girls who went on to the Foreign Services, joined Teach for India. This one girl is off in the villages teaching children."

She brought me over to the wooden placards inscribed with the names of former school Captains displayed outside the main office, one-by-one detailing their current careers. She then gave me a copy of a video the school made a year prior specifically highlighting those alumnae who went on to work in fields of service.

However, not *all* Public Schools or private schools participate in service activities for varied reasons. Some, like Welham Girls', disagree with particular programs' structures but may engage in other types of service. Others critique the lack of engagement inherent in these programs with getting your hands "genuinely dirty," as extended by the Doon Headmaster:

"A lot of other schools could be doing a lot more to get their hands genuinely dirty. And that includes a lot of members of Round Square as well as a lot of the members of the IPSC. I know that because we run a number of [them], on behalf of Round Square and we do it anyway with our regional projects. It's the same as this Round Square, where it's the same schools that show up time in and time out. While there are hundreds of schools that could be involved, and we throw it open to anyone. It's not about taking credit. We say the more the merrier, come and join us, you can use the school as a base and go up into the hills…and we don't get many takers."

I asked whether he thought it was the cost of such programs that served as a deterrent.

"I think it's…uhm…[about] elitism, that's caste, religion…that's not wanting to get your hands dirty. It's paying lip-service. It's because, as Dipankar says in his book, we're still trying to develop an 'elite of calling.' A lot of people think, yea, I'm going to do this sort of thing. But it's a lack of responsibility towards fellow citizens."

I had brought up Dipankar Gupta, an Indian sociologist who had published a book that year called, *Citizen Elite: Revolution from Above*, earlier in our conversation. Gupta (2013:190) argues that while mahatmas or heroes are motivated by "goodwill" and charity (both laudable virtues), India is more in need of an "elite of calling," where the driving factor is "fraternity":

> [H]eroes and mahatmas see their aim as helping the wretched, while for the elite of calling, the goal is to uplift every citizen. In addition, the elite of calling clearly and consciously attack the very foundations of their status and the status quo in order to deliver universally to citizens. Of course, in the long run everyone benefits, but in the short run, the elite are taking a big risk. Heroes, leaders of NGOs, even Mahatmas, rarely ever put their own class interests and social position at stake when they extend their hand to help those in distress. (*ibid.*)

I wanted to see what the Headmaster of India's first Public School would say about this this, of educating a class willing to jeopardize their own social standing in order to eliminate inequality. Little did I know that Gupta was a current member of Doon's Board of Governors and that the Headmaster had, just the night before, suggested to the entire student body that they read his book. I found that part of the push for equality even at all-boys' Public Schools commonly took on the form of service projects and performances related to "gender sensitization" and "women's issues."

"We have very strong gender sensitivity awareness programs and our boys [engage] in social service," said the Doon administrator. "We have 24-hour social service and increasingly our focus has been on save-the-girl-child and women's empowerment so the boys are working with disadvantaged women in villages through micro-finance projects and so on and so forth.

And *here* social services aren't just an arm of the marketing and publicity front because we don't go in for that. It's actually hard core social service and we've got a world class reputation for that. So we are exposing our boys in that way."

During my visits to Scindia, SKV's brother-school, administrators also made it a point to tell me about their engagement with gender equality. They had connections with a local NGO to adopt the education fees of eight underprivileged girls, they described, while their Social Service League was working to "generate employment opportunities for villagers" by teaching "ladies" the "craft of Tie and Dye" and promoting gender equality "through talks and thought provoking *nukkud nataks*" (Scindia webpage, "Nanhi Kali," "Social Service League").

With any such activities involving classed youth partaking in service and travel, or what has been labeled and critiqued as "voluntourism," however, comes questions of intentionality, ethics, and impact. An analysis of these activities not only showed how often they take on women's "issues" as their focus, but how smaller, student-led, local projects, still often competitive for awards or scholarships, frequently proved more process- and impacts-driven than many of the larger trips that turned comparably social, experiential, or performative. As an example of the former, a group of five, 11th Standard Humanities students at MGD participated in a service competition sponsored by tGELF in which they had to identify a local social ill, design and implement a month-long action plan, and then analyze its impacts. Accompanying the students to a government primary school in the Kathputli Nagar slums of Jaipur one hot afternoon in late August, the six of us smooshed into the back of an auto-rickshaw, I asked Mahi who was spearheading the project how she chose her topic of intervention. She explained how she originally wanted to focus on girls' education in government schools but had to expand the project to slum education at large due to site-access. She added,

"You wouldn't believe, but the students are so excited to have us there and to learn. You would think that they would have no interest. Also, one of us left our pen and can you believe that a few of the students brought it over to us telling us that someone forgot their pen? You would think they might steal it but they gave it back to us instead."

However, using this as an example, I would argue that most Public School engagement with service more often impacts those providing the service rather than those being served. These students and the institutions they represent choose those targets deemed "in need" of empowerment, define the program, its timeline, and its moment of completion, often with motivations to help but ultimately becoming the service's sole beneficiary. According to Gaztambide-Fernandez and Howard (2013:2):

> All the differing views of what it means to be justice oriented share in common the fact that they are all manifestations of the ways in which complicity of economically advantaged students is deferred to the very moment in which they declare a commitment to social justice, however construed. At that moment, and particularly in the context of an elite school committed to social justice, the suffering of the poor becomes the fodder through which these students enact a sense of moral standing.

This "deferred complicity" takes the various performative identities that individuals may enact when faced with projects for social justice, described by the Swallwell (2013) as the "meritocratic outlook," the "benevolent benefactor frame," "opting out and becoming resigned," and the "activist ally," and streamlines them into a singular outcome, one where "the projection of self as justice oriented […] has considerable ideological value – in diverting attention away from the power of dominant groups and convincing subordinates that they are concerned for others and are compassionate, kind, and giving" (Gaztambide-Fernandez & Howard 2013:3). And though this aspect of elite school-sponsored service as a method of self-betterment cloaked in the aid of others receives much criticism, many Public School leaders rationalize it as an

essential first step if students from these socio-economic backgrounds are ever to grow up and actually engage in "real" projects for change.

"You know," posited a Welham Girls' administrator, "one of the things we need to inculcate, and it sounds counterintuitive, but, we say that social service is about *them*, but it's not really about them, it's about *me*, my attitudes to the world, my responsibilities to my own citizenship…because the most *urgent* problem facing India is citizenship. I mean we go on and on and on in schools like ours talking about leadership, but actually," she paused for a laugh, "you can't be a good leader until you're a good citizen. And there's a dearth in the ruling elite of this country of good citizens. A good citizen does not steal other people's taxes, does not pay people sub-human wages, does not have people working 18 to 20 hours a day as a domestic serf, in a sort of bonded labor situation. You don't treat your fellow citizens like that, so, uhm…in that sense, the opportunities for social and community service are skin deep but legion. But so often the socio-economic and political set-up makes it so you can wiz through things, get the pictures, and call it service."

I heard many argue that part of the process of service is about self-awareness, acknowledging your relative privilege, and mediating service to the "self" and the identified "others" deemed in need of aid. At the inaugural ceremony of a Senior Round Square Conference hosted by MGD, an administrator advised participating students from the various schools that,

"We all belong to a very privileged section of society and we need to look beyond ourselves. A lot of what we have is perhaps an accident of birth, so at this age we need to move beyond a self-centered perspective, move out of your comfort zone and look to help those less fortunate than you."

This was then immediately elaborated by the event's chief guest, "Life is a journey from 'me' to 'we.' 'Me' is the micro-self while 'we' is the macro-cause. That's what education is about. Especially in Rajasthan, where so much of our culture, our Rajput culture of sacrifice, honor, dignity, and family, [is] about the 'we.' Round Square is an ethos, a philosophy, and a way of life."

Yet this type of thinking has to be learned and experienced in order to become a "way of life;" or as one 11th Standard Welhamite, Kushi, stated to me later that year, service starts out as a school requirement but after time "just becomes a part of us."

"I think it starts off as a compulsion," she said, "because when you're small, you're coming from a house where no one bothers that someone is lying on the street, but [then] you come to this school which was built on the morals of keeping our values intact and respecting one another for who we are. [It's] why we all wear *salwar kameez* and why we can't bring anything from home because it gives us a message that wherever you are [from], good for you, we're very happy for you, but leave that outside the door. Once you step inside, we're all the same. We've had people who've been princesses, people who are granddaughters of politicians, or people whose parents worked for three years just to give the fees for one term, but we're all equal. We all work together, lean on each other, and adjust. And when it comes to service…at this point it just becomes a part of us. At the end of the day, service doesn't always have to be for people who are underprivileged. It may start out that way. But then you find out that you should be doing service to everyone around you, whether it's [to] the school staff or in the mess, whether it's [to] the guards, you just feel that at the end of the day. It makes you feel more accomplished and happy at the end of the day."

With a nod to the idea that service and citizenship is about the "we," Kushi also acknowledges that the "me" is not far behind. I spoke with her a week before Welham Girls' Captain Investiture Ceremony where the chief guest was Chhavi Rajawat. Chhavi, who graduated from Mayo Girls' before attending Lady Shri Ram College for Women (LSR) in Delhi and earning her MBA from Pune, went on to become the *sarpanch* [elected head] of the *gram panchayat* [local government] of Soda, a Rajasthani village outside of Jaipur. In her address to the school, she spoke about citizenship – "The onus is on us to make change in society, with our hearts, heads, and hands. Get dirty and stop being bystanders. Go into the rural areas and make a difference."

Public School students are taught not only that they *should* make a difference, but that they *can*, and that they will become better for it. This is commonly discussed through a language of rights versus duties. During a 10th Standard Geography class, for example, the teacher advised her students,

"People are aware of their rights only and not so much their duties in this country. In seven or eight years, you all may be the leaders and policy makers of this country. Look at the traffic and pollution in Jaipur. It is our responsibility. It may be our *right* to own a car, but it is our duty to care about our city and our impact. If you become a doctor, spend your first years in the village; a teacher, a week, a month, a year in a village, a slum; and you will give back to your nation. It's not just policies that cause change, but the [sic] individual efforts."

At this temporal juncture, there is a notion in India that certain topics – women's empowerment, the environment, education – and certain locations – villages, rural areas, slums, hills – are more suitable for service and that dedication to these areas shows true strength of character as they may prove uncomfortable for more affluent students – "Move out of your

comfort zones," said MGD's administrator; "Get dirty and stop being bystanders," said Chhavi. Yet, as Kushi posits, such an education can also inculcate a sense that "service doesn't always have to be for people who are underprivileged;" it can be performed for your classmate, your teacher, yourself.

Indian Public School requirements and programs for service and humanitarian work raise a number of questions – on the relationships between social class, leadership, citizenship, and moral authority; on the ethics of empowering the self through projects purporting to empower others; on individual motivations and outcomes; and on the lines drawn differentiating the performative from the tangible. However, as we've seen throughout this study dichotomies established, whether between the Western and the Indian, modern and traditional, disciplined and undisciplined, frequently prove false or at least more complicated than presented. Though commonly invoked by my informants as descriptors oppositional in meaning, such dichotomies were more often experienced as intersectional, as fodder for mediation, adjustment, and flexibility. Similarly, I argue that the lines drawn between tangible and performative change, between empowering the self and empowering others, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Not only are there tangible aspects to the performative as "performed practice" (Sharma 2008:93), but students regularly engage in such mediations, between the "me" and the "we," in staged enactments, deliberations, and practices of service, empowerment, and, as discussed next, future-oriented choice.

Representations of Future Choice and Empowered Decisions

At all four schools, depictions of the "empowered woman" often took theatrical form. Female figures from North Indian Hindu epics or Rajput and Maratha martial caste lore were

especially prominent. These figures popularly surfaced at IPSC Cultural and Literary Festivals, cultural night performances at inter-school Round Squares and MUNs, and school Annual Day celebrations, but they also appeared rather regularly at daily, all-school morning assemblies, inter-House competitions, and festivals. At one such assembly at SKV, for example, the student body was treated to a contemporary dance performance by a group of five senior girls. They first depicted the goddesses Parvati, Sati/Sita, and Draupadi, representations of the *pativrata* or "ideal Hindu wife," portraying their various qualities of female duty, domesticity, selflessness, and sacrifice. Then later, another student emerged as Kali/Durga, the warrior-goddess versions of Parvati, symbols of true female power or *Shakti*, defeating the demon, Mahishasura, when all other male gods were unable. The performance ended with all five dancers lining up behind one another to appear as the warrior goddess's ten-armed form. While common across India as elements of various classical forms of storytelling or dance (*e.g. kathak* or *Bharatanatyam*), the use of Hindu religious and/or martial caste figures as representations of the empowered Indian woman within all-girls' Public Schools has an extended and particularly rooted history, especially when considered in terms of their feudal and (post-)colonial founding.

Sarojini Naidu, the namesake of one of MGD's student Houses, hailed in her activist relationship with Gandhi represents part of this history as their political movement linked an idealized notion of womanhood with nationalism, using the orthodox Hindu construction of the *pativrata* to empower middle and upper class women to join in the nationalist movement (albeit in a specific kind of way). Gandhi claimed that India needed women leaders who were "pure, firm, and self-controlled" like the ancient heroines, Damayanti, Draupadi, and Sita.[90] These

[90] Damayanti was the faithful and long-suffering wife of Nala who was able to recognize her husband in any guise; Draupadi was the wife of the five Pandava brothers in the *Mahabharata* who was recognized by Krishna for her chastity and innocence; and Sita was the wife of Rama who followed her husband into exile, suffered abduction from the demon Ravana, and underwent an ordeal of fire to prove her fidelity (Forbes 1996:124). In fact, Gandhi

nationalist ideologies combined with long-standing martial caste lore involving women decapitating or setting themselves ablaze to give their husbands strength and focus in battle, or even riding off into battle themselves, permeated historic all-girls' Public Schools at their founding. Visiting MGD's campus in December 1948, Sarojini Naidu addressed the school's student body, stating:

> The girls [at this school] are from the most conservative families of India and are being taught how to be modern, happy, healthy, with a broad outlook on the future and to realize that each of them is a citizen of India as well as her own section of India. I hope that this delightful little institution fostered by so sweet a godmother will become a real centre [sic] of culture and service for Indian girls who all feel privileged to take their share in creating new traditions for a free India. (MGD Silver Jubilee Souvenir 1948)

Today, students at these schools not only continue to represent and perform such models of empowered Indian womanhood through Hindu religious and martial figures, but also in depictions of those involved in the Indian nationalist and women's movements like Sarojini Naidu in addition to other, more contemporary female figures making strides in diverse fields. During MGD's 70th Anniversary Day in 2014, for example, Class V students, flanked by signs reading "Women"/"Empowerment," dressed up as Naidu, Indira Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and Malala Yousafzai as well as other South Asian women who made names for themselves in sports, the arts, science, politics, social activism, and the armed forces, culminating with, of course, Maharani Gayatri Devi herself. The frequency of these performances and their selected representations offer various yet particular models of empowered female personhood to current students, figures they are encouraged to emulate as well as embody through performance.

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often compared the British to the several-headed demon Ravana, to whom, under colonialism, the enslaved people were losing all sense of *dharma* [righteousness] (*ibid.*:125).

Figure 40 Figures of Indian women's empowerment including badminton champion, Saina Nehwal; politician and retired police officer, Kiran Bedi; Bharatnatyam dancer, Padma Subrahmanyam; and missionary, Mother Teresa

Figure 41 Maharani Gayatri Devi depicted as a symbol of "Women"/"Empowerment"

Verbalized and written storytelling also served as another venue for presenting such messages. Similar to their theatrical counterparts, many of these stories revolved around constructing versions of female personhood around narratives of perseverance, sacrifice, and "choice." At a morning assembly at MGD in early March, a Class XI student presented an article called, "The Pregnant Deer." The student read:

> A pregnant deer stood in a remote forest about to give birth to her baby. Lightning struck down and set the forest to her back ablaze, a river lay in front, a hunter with a drawn bow and arrow to her right, and a hungry tiger to her left. What could she do? The only thing she could. She made a choice to stand and deliver her baby. At that moment, lightning struck near the hunter, blinding his eyes and causing the bow to react, sending the arrow missing the deer and hitting the tiger. The rains came down and doused the forest fire. The lesson is about choice and sacrifice. Every moment is a moment of choice. What is important? It's bringing new life into the world. The rest is out of your hands.

At the end of the story, the English teacher standing next to me said rather despondently, "Well *that* was not the most empowering of stories. All it does is talk about how the woman's job is to take what comes her way, to sacrifice, do her duty and hope that some outside greater force will save her or legitimize the situation. It tells the girls that the sole and most important duty of a woman is childbirth."

I nodded, listening as she continued, "So many girls, especially in Rajasthan, still come with this mentality. Graduate, graduate, graduate, and then get married. It's family influence and if it's not the parents, it's the grandparents. We have more Bania, you know, business, families here at this school now so…maybe the girl helps with the father's or husband's job. If they own a jewelry business, maybe she becomes a jewelry designer; if he has a textile business, she is a fashion designer, an interior designer. She spends most of her time rearranging and redesigning their own homes, wearing fancy clothes and jewelry. Stories like these give the girls a distorted

personality. They're aspirational for so long while at these schools, so the parents say, 'OK, let them go to school now. In case we fall on bad times, they should be able to stand on their own; let's empower them.' But it's a *limited* empowerment."

I asked whether she thought this was reflected in her students at MGD.

"Well, this is why I think so many of the girls in this generation approach life in a more carefree manner while they're here. They may have been told that fine, you can go to school, college, graduate, but afterward you get married. So they exercise their freedoms now. They go to coaching, dances, Bollywood dreams of love marriages, socials, travel…these aspirational plans. These girls may be elite in *that* sense or come from middle, upper class families, but many of their family businesses or politician families are run on reputation, on networks, which are still achieved through marriage. Maybe five or so in a section may have *truly* open-minded parents and may be able to pursue what they want, but that's about it."

For this teacher, empowerment at these schools can become a defined, sorted, and typified kind of empowerment, circumscribed by familial and societal structures. Though they may consider the changing needs of the times (especially economically) as reasons to allow girls to go to school and work a job, she posits, these opportunities are limited by persisting patriarchal values that deem specific roles or characteristics as gendered. The story of the pregnant deer and this teacher's interpretations are compelling not for the purpose of putting forth an argument favoring the teacher's perspective of what forms empowerment *should* take, but in setting-up considerations of the forms it *can* take, that is, how things like choice are differentially represented and discussed by those at these schools. And what's more, the role of performance in presenting, inculcating, and diversifying these messages.

Sharma (2008:29) has argued that women's empowerment in India understood through global, neoliberal development strategies proves "contradictory terrain" as it is tied to conceptions of choice related to the individual, control, participation, and freedom. There is a need to understand how international development agendas become situated, experienced, and practiced in context (Bajaj 2014). Social psychologist and business choice theorist, Sheena Iyengar (2010:213), posits that, "Choosing is a creative process, one through which we construct our environment, our lives, our selves." Yet, "when we speak of choice, what we mean is the ability to exercise control over ourselves and our environment. In order to choose, we must first perceive that control as possible….We all want to be in control of our lives, but how we understand control depends on the stories we are told and the beliefs we come to hold" (*ibid.*:6-7, 28). While in places like the U.S., popular discourses hold that empowered choice is independently made and that more choices are better as they create opportunities to demonstrate competence, in many ways, choice in places like India is largely thought to create a lack of focus, selfishness, indecision, demotivation, and competence in nothing. It is important, then, to learn how others "speak choice" and how they incorporate choices into the narrative of their own lives (*ibid.*:271). In the case of my student informants, there emerged narratives of a persistent pressure to choose, to make the "right" choices, and the sooner the better.

Practicing Choice

One afternoon while sitting in SKV's dining hall having lunch with a 7th Standard student, Nandini, we started talking about my study. As I described my overall topic and points of interest, she looked a little overwhelmed and asked,

"I really want to choose an aim. How do you decide?"

"Why do you feel like you have to have to decide right now?" I inquired.

"Because I want to start planning for my future," she said.

Throughout the year, students often expressed the tensions they felt among the lessons they were taught regarding agency, adjusting, and "what is written," of individual rights and collective duties, in environments where performances relating female choice to sacrifice were frequently followed the next day by speeches made by accomplished female guests or presenters at career workshop declaring such things as, "There is now no career girls cannot pursue as the world is changing, so follow your passions no matter the obstacles," spouted in a presentation at MGD. It is not, then, the *lack* of choices students face but how they practice choice, the choosing process, that is of interest.

MC: You mentioned that girls that go to Welhams today have this thing called, choice…
Welham admin: …which not many others have.
MC: Right. But do you see this choice as tied up with parents?
Welham admin: There are all kinds of choices and no choice is made without consulting others. But compared with what other girls have in this country, for our girls the world is their oyster.

As we saw two chapters ago, for many students, choices about curricula, schools, subjects, Streams, colleges, courses, careers, and so forth were largely described as self-driven. Take this conversation with Diyashi and Anjali, for instance, both MGDians.

"So how involved are your parents in your education? Did they ever lead you in any specific direction?" I asked.

"Not really," said Diyanishi. "I mean, they've never really forced me to perhaps choose this kind of subject or…I mean, yes, always they are after me – 'You should study. You should study. Do good,' and all, but, I kind of do, generally, fairly well, so that's not an issue. But

they've never forced me to choose any particular subject. Since 6th Standard they've told me that I'm free to do whatever I want. Since the 6th Standard we had to choose a third language between French and German and Sanskrit and I chose French. I mean, they knew nothing of French. Both of them had studied Sanskrit within their school. So they said, 'It's your choice. Do whatever you want to do.' So, since that time only I've had this freedom in my choices in the education field. Also, when we passed 10th Standard we have to choose which stream we want to go in, so they never really forced me. Both of them being Science students they never, not even once said…they said, 'If you want to go for Arts that's OK, it's your will because obviously you know what you can do better.'

"What about after graduation?" I asked.

Anjali, who was listening to her batchmate, stepped in, offering, "They've left it to me, what I want to do. Earlier I wanted to do Socio Honors, no, actually Eco Honors, but then I realized that's *too* difficult because that's, I mean, a lot of maths [sic] and maths is hard. Really, I'm not so good at maths. So I dropped that idea. And then Psych Honors and then Socio Honors…it kept changing. Through 11th Standard it kept changing. Now when I came to 12th I realized, no, Law, I should do Law! That's pretty good because I'm not really after money. Money for subsistence, that's OK, but I want to do something *meaningful*, something that really empowers me, so, why not Law? Again, I went to my parents, 'Ok, now I want to do Law,'" she laughed, recalling the interaction. "So they said, 'Well, that obviously needs preparation,' so they said, 'Ok, we'll go to the best institutes [tuitions] with you, whichever, you know, you feel is good, whichever we feel is good. We'll get you admitted.' So they got me admitted this year."

For some, this ability to make decisions was part of being disciplined and mature; for those like Diyanshi, it was about knowing yourself enough to choose a path of interest; while for

others, like Anjali, it was about finding a path that "empowers" you or allows you to make a difference. In these examples, parental pressure was frequently perceived or described as absent while parental *advice* or resources were certainly sought.

Then there were proportions of students who either felt as though parents or family members forced their hands or that the vast amount of choices and related fears of making the wrong choice created doubt and a desire to simply relinquish choice. Experiences such as these were expressed whenever students attended school-sponsored career workshops or college fairs.

At one career workshop held at MGD in October, the presenter began by saying, "Some students say they will decide after their Board scores, how they score on entrance exams, parental influence, distance from home, time, marriage decisions, income, demand…but you are a fortunate group of students, that you go to a school like this with its lovely lawns, huge space, that holds career fairs. You can learn about options, explore your interests. You have a faculty that can support those interests. Not many schools in India are like that. Understand and appreciate what you have here. Understand your place in society, your standing."

There was a pause as a student sitting in one of the stadium's side doorways raised her hand, "I'm in the Science stream and I hate it. How easy is it to switch after graduation?"

Two 11th Standard Science students sitting on either side of me, Druvi and Shradha, whispered that the student, Yasha, was going through a difficult time with her father forcing her to pick Science even though she wanted to choose Humanities. Druvi explained,

"For us, in India, there is still this mentality that Science – doctor, engineer – or CA [chartered accountant] are the best professions. So there's a certain amount of pressure to pursue these."

"But I thought that mentality was changing," I put forth. "A number of students have told me that it no longer exists, except perhaps with their grandparents."

"It is changing…maybe 5% of people," she qualified, "5% have really opened up their minds to other options, but it's still there."

Shradha then chimed in, "You're not really free to choose, not really. Choice is a façade…for a lot of families anyways."

"Is it different for boys and girls?" I asked.

Druvi thought for a second and said, "Less so now, but it's still there. For example, if I don't get into a college of my choice for engineering, a good school, then my father has already said it would be fine…. I'll go to Maharani College or something in Jaipur and then just get married afterwards. But if my brother doesn't get into a good school, they've said that they'd work to make some other kind of arrangement for a good job. But even in *choosing* engineering, there are still constraints. I want to do mechanical or aeronautical, but to that people like my grandmother will say, no, be mindful with different mechanical positions because as a girl I wouldn't want a position in the field. I was like, what? So it is still there…limiting choice."

The presenter then proceeded to show Power Point slides listing the hundreds of majors, degrees, and professions students could pursue coming from Science, Commerce, or Humanities backgrounds as well as the application processes and forms required to apply to these courses and schools. And this was all before discussing "foreign education opportunities" in a section entitled, "Going Global – More Choices for More Students."

A month later at Mayo Girls, after sitting through a similar presentation put on by Ashok University, I asked a student what she thought of the workshop. She responded despondently,

"It's too many choices! It's a bit exhausting. I always sit down at these things thinking I know what I want to do and then they give us a million more options and I'm like, oh, that sounds good, and so does that! But then I think…all these workshops and presenters are always telling us to 'choose your interest,' 'pick what you love,' but it doesn't work that way. The Indian schooling system is rigid. So often our marks on Boards determine our decisions so what's the difference? It really comes down to a choice between college or course – to go to a good name school like St. Stephen's or go to a good course program like Economics Honors at DU [Delhi University]."

Iyengar (2010:178) argues that there is such a thing as "excess choice" or "choice overload," which creates stress, a lack of confidence in your choice, doubt, or regret. Students like the one just quoted at Mayo, regularly voiced such experiences. Another example emerged after the session at MGD when parents were invited to stay on for a separate session called, "Positive Parenting." As most had arrived early to observe the student presentation, this quickly turned into more of a Q&A than anything separately informational or instructive. Immediately, one parent raised her hand and asked,

"What if my student really doesn't know what to do and just keeps asking me to *tell* her what to do? Every different day she's having a different idea of what she wants to do. Then she says how confused and tired she is and how, '*Ma*, just choose for me please, *na*?'"

In these cases, students (and parents) were not so much excited or empowered by presentations of choice but confused, disheartened, and at times, fatigued. A few weeks following this workshop, the principal mentioned that Yasha's mother had come to her office crying about the situation, stating that while she supported her daughter's choice, her husband was threatening to kick them out of their house if she allowed her to switch.

"Often these girls don't see these decisions as life-changing or individual," said the principal. "They may think their family can choose what is right. Or if there is no inherent passion in anything then why not pursue what someone else strongly favors? But if you do have a strong favor, like Yasha who in her heart wanted to do Humanities but her father made her take Science, can you imagine the resentment everyday coming to school? In life, especially for girls, whether about marriage or career choice, it's all about adjusting. Who knows if your husband and his family will even let you keep a job? You can't be too attached. You have to be flexible, be open to opportunities that come along. There are choices, no matter how structured, or circumscribed."

Here, the principal notes that a similar mentality can come into play during discussions of future marriage arrangements. Nowadays at these schools, Tara, a 12th Standard MGDian, served as a rare example where decisions of marriage, college, and career became intertwined so quickly. Sitting with her by the kho kho fields one afternoon, I asked how she decided on Arts as her stream.

"I decided in 9th only that I will take Arts for sure and then I pursued it further and now I'm finally considering pursing it for my BA next year."

"Do you know which schools you'll be applying to yet?" I asked.

"Not yet," Tara stated. "I've seen many, but not yet. I will not be doing it public. I'll be doing it as private, the college."

Confused at the terminology, I asked what she meant.

"Uhm…just because I'll be getting married, that's why. I'll be staying at home and going to give my exams only. Just study at home and give my exams to the college."

Still unsure, I tried to clarify, "How do you study at home? What do you mean? You'll enroll in a college and…."

"I'll just take admission to a college and there is an option in those forms that you'll do it 'private,' 'regular,' or 'basic.' I'll do private so I'll be studying it on my own. I'll just have to go and give my exams in the college. That's it."

"I see. So was this your decision or your parents? Are you able to be pretty open with them?"

"I'm only frank with a few friends," Tara explained. "Not with my mother; I don't tell her anything. My parents won't support me perhaps if I don't do things their way."

"So is it a choice then?" I said.

"No, it's not a choice. I didn't want to get married during my 12th [Standard], but it's because of some of my family problems. My family is like something very deep, *deep*, into the traditions. They have seen the outside world and they want me to behave properly and be disciplined."

Wondering, I asked her, "Do you see that as related to education?"

"Oh yes," she answered at once. "MGD prepared *me* as a girl who can stand for her own, to stand for her own rights. The talks which happen in our school, the exhibitions, the motivational talks, I think from those things we have learned a lot. And today I am happy to be an MGDian and I don't want to go! But I will go, it's OK."

"And what about this word 'empowerment,' what does that mean?"

"It's about making the difficult choices," Tara said. "An MGDian can face anything and take up any challenge."

My conversation with Tara brought up a number of perspectives on choice – one where choice is not individual, not about the "me," but a family decision; and one where *you* may ultimately choose but in light of another's preferences. It is a mediation or overlap of the individual with the collective, of rights and duties. This collective weighing of others' perspectives categorized the decision making processes of a number of my student informants, described in particularly gendered ways. Many suggested that girls were just naturally better at compromise, at adjusting; others suggested there was nothing natural about it, but that it was something which girls were more so made to *become* skilled. The former view surfaced in conversation with a 10th Standard Mayoite as she described why she thought gender inequalities existed globally, with so many examples of women receiving the short-end of the stick.

"I think it's because that women have a greater power of understanding. Men, I think, are stubborn in many ways. Like, if I want this, it has to happen, it's my house, I rule the world, sort of a thing. But for women it's more about compromise. They can adjust with whatever life they live as opposed to men. They do understand. So that's why. It's that soft-heartedness they have. They can understand and perhaps that's their biggest fault as well. They're willing to sacrifice."

This narration linking sacrifice and choice to a particularly female experience in India was commonly invoked, often in reference to those historic or religious exemplars of female sacrifice as strength discussed earlier in their performative form. With that said, the choosing process was most often presented by students in more everyday discussions as "owing it," of making others happy through your decisions, of "trust," and of not being so "selfish." These decisive moments were specifically understood as collective because their impacts were seen as collective too. Chatting with another 10th Standard Mayoite following the career workshop, she said,

"I think about, if I choose this, will I be successful, not just for myself, but for my parents, for my society?"

Sacrifice and "Owing it"

Bhavika was one of my more surprising examples. She was the first student I met on this research project and, if you recall, one of the MGDians charged with giving me a campus tour when she was caught bunking class on my first day. Bhavika was funny, a dancer, cricketer, an amazing musician, and unapologetically frank. She was one of the people who once described her school to me as a "circus" when she felt overwhelmed by the amount of things she had to do in the coming month – a cricket tournament, a dance competition, and Board exams. She had also been a part of a group of students the year before who got in major trouble for drinking at the school's annual Dandiya Night. She would later describe that experience to me as her "wake-up call." One evening in March, I accompanied the principal to Jaipur's City Palace for an outdoor performance of Indian classical music. Bhavika was the one student invited. It was during some pre-performance mingling fit with chai, cucumber tea sandwiches, samosas, and sauce that I overheard her talking to the principal of a neighboring day-school and mention that she had just picked her Stream choice, Commerce with Maths. Surprised, as she had on several occasions stated that she was going with Science, I went over after the principal moved on to ask about the switch.

"Yea, well, I was originally thinking PCB [Physics, Chemistry, Biology], but after talking with my father… I asked him when I got the form, '*Aré*, what should I do? Tell me what to take.'" She paused, reenacting the despondency of the moment. "My brother is doing Finance or Commerce you can say…it's a good post…so he said I should do that as well. He said, 'We'll

go for Commerce.' So we talked about how I should do this, but then at the end of our talk, my father was like, 'But wait, what do *you* think?' she recalled, laughing. "But, I mean, I'll do whatever makes others happy. I'll do good in whatever I pick…not to be 'over-confident,'" she added, making air quotes and then pulling smartly at the front of her shirt for effect. "I can do anything well, so why not make someone else happy with my choice?

"But what *do* you want to do?" I urged. "That doesn't really feel like a personal choice."

"Of course it is," she said. "I *personally* chose to make someone else happy. I've spent my whole life up to now thinking of what I want and acting on that. Now it's time to think of others. I guess you can say that Bhavika's getting more mature." She laughed and then walked off in search of more snacks.

While Bhavika may fall into the category of students MGD's principal described as not being so horribly set on any one Stream, so why not let someone else choose, or into those who feel as though their parents know best, she also represents a tendency among the students I interacted with to rationalize these choices as moments to enact selflessness, to perform a service to others, as something they "owed."

Sitting with Kushboo, a Captain at Welham Girls', in a small courtyard back by the school's music rooms one evening, she described her process in a similar fashion. She noted that when it came to Stream and career, her decisions were largely self-driven with the support of her family. Marriage, however, presented a different case.

"What about marriage?" I asked. "Will your parents decide?" It had just started gently sprinkling so we pulled our folding chairs under the covered performance space.

"Oh yea, that's there. Like, everyone's had an arranged marriage in my family so we've been told that fine you're going to have an arranged marriage and we're going to select these

guys and fine you can choose amongst them or once they're selected you can have a courtship period if you wish, but I mean my dad says to me, 'You know, Khushboo, I don't say 'no' to you, whatever makes you happy I let you do that, but when it comes to this one decision, you know, let us make it because we know what's right so trust us in that one thing.' And we're like, 'OK, dad.' So, you know, like, some of my batchmates don't agree with my thinking in this regard, how quickly I've accepted this fact that I am going to end up with a person that my parents choose, but I feel that, you know, I mean I do trust them…I don't trust them *so* much, but I do trust them a lot. Earlier I used to have the same opinion as these others that, how can you make all the decisions for me, but I think I owe this to them, you know? They do so much for me. They tried their best to send us to places where we could learn. I think it's one thing I can do for them."

"Do you see it as a sacrifice?" I asked.

"I used to," Kushboo admitted, "but now mainly not because I know I still have an option after they've put up their final options. I still have the final decision."

We talked a bit about the logistics of this – *e.g.* would she be able to suggest someone; were there any restrictions or veto possibilities; how would (re)location, higher education, or career factor in – and then I brought it back, saying,

"'I owe it to them'…I've heard a lot of girls saying this."

"I have always liked the idea of having an arranged marriage, though," Kushboo said.

"Do you think boys see it that way?" I wondered aloud.

She considered, "Well, boys get much more choice. It's always X's *bahu* [wife]. It's always *his* this, *his* that. So they get a lot of preference. Some may act pricey, but I think they

feel the same way. They believe in their parents. But I think that guys do have more liberty in bringing up someone."

There is not only a notion of trust involved here, but Kushboo also states that because of everything her parents have done for her education, she owes it to them to have an arranged marriage. While the macro decisions, therefore, may be that of her parents', the micro decisions are her own, falling in line with a statement made by MGD's principal that, "There are choices, no matter how structured, or circumscribed." Though opting out of choice may indicate confusion and fatigue due to "choice overload," decisions made to relinquish choice or for the sake of others in many ways support the various aims of Public School service education delineated earlier – to go outside your comfort zone, empower yourself by empowering others, and be willing to let go of your own positionality for the good of the "we."

At one of SKV's monthly House Birthday celebrations, during which students order food from off-campus, play games, have cake, and present short skits and songs in their pajamas, a performance was put forth depicting the Hindu goddess, Sita, enduring a test of fire [*agni pariksha*] to prove her chastity to her husband, Rama, after being held captive by the demon, Ravana. The short skit ended with one of the Class X students declaring, "*Kuch paane ke liye, kuch khona padta hai*," "In order to gain something, you must lose something." Through the round of applause that erupted afterwards, a Housemate stood up saying, "Too serious, yea?" and switched the music on to the then-popular Bollywood hit, "*Sheila ki Jawani*" ["Sheila's Youth"], to which everyone started dancing and singing:

> I know you want it but you're never going to get it/
> *Tere hath kabhi naa aani* [I won't fall into your hands]/
> *Maane na mane koi duniya ye saari, mere ishq ki hai deewani* [Believe it or not, the world is crazy for my love]/

Ab dil karta hai haule haule se, main khud ko gale lagaaun [I feel like I should gently hold myself]/

Kisi aur ki mujko zaroorat kya, main to khud se pyaar jataaun [I don't need anyone else; I love myself]/

What's my name/ What's my name/

My name is Sheila/ *Sheila ki jawani* [Sheila's youth]/

I'm too sexy for you/ *Tere hath kabhi naa aani* [I won't fall into your hands].

(Dadlani 2010)

I couldn't help but see thematic parallels between the previous skit and the song's lyrics. While a great deal of the performances put on at these all-girls' Public Schools depict empowered female figures who went against the conventions of their time, who pushed for change and individual rights, there are also those that represent empowerment through enactments of duty, selflessness, and service to others – all are difficult choices.

Concluding Thoughts

According to Sharma (2008: 29, 22), global, neoliberal development strategies of women's empowerment work as "an emancipatory tactic that doubles as a technology of government and development," involving the "active participation of peoples in the project of governance to make it more equitable, just, participatory, and efficient." In this way, many all-girls' Indian Public School students, tasked with becoming leaders, with participating in service projects, and raising awareness about gender inequalities, are growing fatigued and even bored by way of discursive oversaturation, struggling to see past the performative to the tangible, in their abilities to affect change for others, the need to affect change at all, and to determine what empowerment and "choice" mean or may look like for themselves. This chapter critically

considered the complexities involved in only offering a singular view of empowerment, one frequently established abroad and then used to dominate alternate forms *in situ*. This is not to say that complete relativism is productive, but that female Public School students offer various other ways to experience, practice, and identify who is in need of empowerment, ways that do not always look like independent choice or service to others, which can conversely account for experiences of disengagement or even disempowerment. They suggest there are perhaps more powerful forms of privilege that prove less performative, of providing service to the self or making choice with or for the happiness of others. It is the traversing of such "contradictory terrain" (Sharma 2008) that leads some, like my MGDian friend at the IPSC Cultural Festival, to question, "Why is *everything* about women?" as they emerge from positions differentially attached to sentiments of, "I am not *that* woman."

CONCLUSION

Reflections, Contributions, and Personal Mediations

Entering this project, I was intrigued with the ways the upper-class, Indian female body and measures of its personhood were constructed and made sensible through spaces and discourses of formal education. Particularly in northern India, where so much is made of the destitution of the government schooling system and the "plight of the female child," I found the existence of institutions like the all-girls' Indian Public Schools, identified as the progenitors of upper-caste girls' emancipation and today named some of the best schools in the country, purported exemplars of empowerment and privilege, significant. I wanted to know more about them, dive into their historic and present-day complexities, into the ways they engaged with structures of class, gender, and related debates concerning the purposes of elite education.

Whereas previous literature had considered all-boys' or co-ed Public Schools on the subcontinent, the manners in which colonial-nationalist modernity and now neoliberal development consistently rooted their systems of meaning and missions in the classed, female figure suggested that these all-girls' schools were in-need of their own measured analysis, one beyond their past existence in a few paragraphs or a chapter dedicated to "gender." The decision to focus on four schools came quickly though not easily. The differences among MGD, SKV, Mayo Girls', and Welham Girls' were rife and spoke to the importance of regionality; of founding and present actors, missions, and structures; and, ultimately, of creating projects that unpack the diversity of such institutions and the female experience. From there, gaining access required achieving a point of saturation at one school, establishing my credentials and intent, before all other doors opened. I saw these schools as places that both concretized and

problematized models of social reproduction, empowerment via education, femininity, and privilege; their students, poised to engage with seeming contradictions of purpose and person.

Much of this emerged in how these models were internalized by institutions and individuals alike. They were models diversely owned, reworked, challenged, and resisted, experienced as everything from dominating to liberating. But the greatest tool utilized was that of mediation. Though it can be said that schools and students must always mediate between the external and internal, among societal, familial, institutional, and individual desires, it is rare that there is a systematic history of ownership over mediation, one particularly classed and gendered, as is built into the formal missions of these Public Schools – of combining the "Best of the East" with the "Best of the West" – as well as in the more informal, quotidian ways these girls experienced being in the world. And while I suggest this "type" of mediation detailed here is something special, uniquely laced with meaning and uniquely practiced, I also contend similar mediations exist globally, a relic of colonial modernity in conversation with situated understandings and enactments of gender. As such, I have examined not only the ways mediation is built into the very structures of these schools but also how students consciously deliberate over its approach and making. It is through this very language that success, empowerment, and privilege were thought achievable, embodiable, legible, or even acceptable. This ability was identified as something to be proud of, an essentialized character of elite, female identity, but also something resented in its gendered requirements. These experiences of mediation led administrators of all-girls' Public Schools to describe themselves as having to walk a "peculiar tightrope" and students feeling as though they must be "600 girls in one."

In this concluding chapter, I reengage with several of this dissertation's main arguments and contributions, further connecting them to larger considerations of the legacies of colonialism,

particularly its dichotomous constructions of gendered and classed personhoods and exclusionary modernities; the reclamations of such constructs within (inter)national development discourses of girls' empowerment; and the role of neoliberal privatization and competition in reconstituting elite schooling experiences and gender as a globalizing force.

Legacies of Colonialism: Dichotomies with Meaning

Throughout this study, I found these schools simultaneously identified as venues of empowerment and progress, tradition and conservation, but also apprehension, loss, and (neo)colonial domination. The source, I posit, of such seemingly divergent narratives can be located in the legacies of colonial modernity, particularly those discursive binaries, (re)established over time, that place "the self" and "the other" along spectrums of power, status, and belonging.

In one sense, these narratives were used to control and exclude, resulting in and achievable through institutions like the Indian Public School. Decades of feudal-colonial-nationalist interactions on the subcontinent constructed delineations between the male/female, West/East, modern/traditional, public/private, political/social, and so forth, arranged along hierarchies of identity and difference, as systems of meaning and legitimization. Here, to be upper-caste and female was to be the symbolic embodiment of the home, the private; of religiosity and caste communities; tradition; and, eventually, determinations of "true" Indianness and national progress. These structures in turn determined what type(s) of education were deemed appropriate and for whom. In Chapter 1 we saw this in the very persons of Maharani Gayatri Devi, Vijaya Raje Scindia, and, though in different ways, Miss Linnell, Miss Oliphant,

and Miss Lutter. The influence and mediation of such expectations were present in their descriptions of leading a "double life," of balancing Indianness with Westernization, and in their practices of "keeping-while-giving." They also emerged in the schools these women established and the goals therein – of creating modern girls, fit for contributing to a newly independent nation and shifting marital preferences, though not *too* modern as to disrupt certain caste customs or question their domestic duties. These institutions were born out of and drew character attachments from these dualisms, simultaneously propping them up while working to establish bridges between their extremes.

I suggest similar deliberations continue at these schools today, though in varied forms. Some reestablish old binaries, particularly those classed and gendered, while others provide newer formulations of difference. Though male/female oppositions still hold strong in accounts of identity and difference, perhaps even more apparent on these campuses are those drawn between female others. While some of these narratives of difference re-subsume women's identities, bodies, and agency within larger community issues of class/caste/religion/region/etc.; others reestablish them within fictive "gender" communities of universal womanhood. Both, however, set up women in opposition to "other women;" misrecognize the existence of intersectional femininities, whereby, for example, the upper-class/caste, educated, Hindi speaking, Indian woman occupying public spaces is often labelled antithetical or, at least, contradictory; and result in girls feeling as though they must mediate middling space of "betweenness," existing within and serving as links between such dualisms.

These legacies of othering through discourses of modernity and development were particularly evident in school admissions policies. As early venues of emancipation, all-girls' Public Schools were commonly portrayed as opening doors to those without access to formal

education; comparatively, as contemporary venues of purported *empowerment*, their cost-prohibitive natures and anxieties over status and loss have largely leaned these doors shut. As explored in Chapter 2, those othered in these processes were so-established through a familiar language, describing them as comparably conservative or backward; as lacking in discipline, morality, or merit. Though scholarship programs and diversely-supported policies such as the Right to Education Act were at times verbalized as part of an elite institution's moral duty to enact, the difficulties of "folding-in" these students, who then struggled to "match up," were also portrayed in terms elaborating foundational differences in character or capability.

Still, all-girls' Public School clientele has changed, encouraging these institutions to rework narratives of self and other, markers of belonging and identifiers of difference, and refocus their approaches and aims in response to certain felt-tensions. In Chapter 3, this emerged in valuations and practices of discipline and its lack made spatial, temporal, and bodily; in Chapter 4, in creating "all-rounders" in a system that mainly rewards *raṭification* [rote memorization]; and in Chapter 5, in the use of English compared to Hindi or other native vernaculars. I found that while Public School "character" was usually presented as the former qualities or practices commonly categorized on the side of the spectrum related to upper-class habitus (*i.e.* discipline, all-roundership, English), external pressures, individual student desires, and, at times, the very results of such character (*i.e.* independence, choice, success-oriented) influenced a rise in the latter (*i.e.* indiscipline, rote memorization, Hindi). These qualities and practices were met by varying degrees of institutional policing in attempts to realign them with recognized elements of appropriate, upper-class femininity. There is a relationship here, as I posit in Chapter 6, between these projects of realignment and the engagement of all-girls' Public Schools in (inter)national discourses of empowerment. Both recreate dichotomies of what it is to

“be modern” in gendered and classed ways. There are those who argue that development projects in this way end up serving as neo-colonial tools of simplification and differentiation through a rehabilitation of imperial binaries, as governmentality veiled as freedom. I admit there were uncomfortable moments when I found myself thinking all-girls’ Public Schools as elite institutions might work in these same ways – in moments of excessive student policing, voiced apprehension over the acceptance of “othered” families, or sporadic disregard for service staff members. However, I eventually found there were more productive ways to look at the construction, meaning-making, and use of such dichotomies in these spaces especially when considered below their institutional frames, that is, at the level of individuals and particularly in the case of students. There is something to say about how this language became a part of everyday student understandings and practice, not only in how it was owned but variously (re)interpreted or rejected.

Students indeed upheld dichotomies of the self and other, specifically in cases of peer-group belonging or in differentiating themselves from those at other schools. This study has provided many examples of such self- and student-to-student policing. In some of these instances, student-led regulation matched those institutional or societal delineations laid out prior. In other instances, however, students flipped these frameworks, characterizing them as dated or as non-contextual, fictive models that misrepresent the diversity of student experiences, practices, or abilities to recreate ideological value. Here, things like speaking Hindi, bunking class, rote memorization, etc. were comparably identified as cool or even reclaimed as exemplars of discipline themselves, their use seen as displays of exerted independence or choice in decisions to opt-out of practices thought unbeneficial or lacking in meaning. And, though students commonly invoked this language of extremes in describing certain actions or qualities

as “modern” or “traditional,” “Western” or “Indian,” “rustic” or “classy,” “disciplined” or “desperate,” “feminine” or “masculine,” etc., much of what they *exercised* or described *experiencing* was considerably more fluid. Mediation proved an evident factor not only in student understandings of self but also in their methodologies of success – in feeling the pressures of these dichotomies, their gendered or classed expectations, in finding meaning in their use, but then experiencing or practicing them in their overlap, depending on context or audience. Among other things, therefore, to be educated, upper-class, and female for many of these girls was to speak English and Hindi, but also Hinglish; to follow the rules but also know when to withdraw; to be able to engage in high-level debates while mugging up with the best of them; to carry, combine, and question the delimitations made between “types” of bodily comportment and dress. And while students admitted a great deal of this was done unconsciously, even in those moments where dichotomies were verbally invoked or problematized, there were other times when students stated an acute awareness of mediation and its making. It was utilitarian, performative, and learned by observing others, through regulation, and practice. With that said, it’s important to note that students never really transcended these binary frames. Even when they criticized, flipped, combined, or rejected their descriptors, they were still bound by their language.

Empowerments:
Gender, Education, and Development

Entering this study, I was regularly presented with narratives that described how in northern India giant swaths of girls were in-need of this thing called “empowerment,” thought largely achievable through this other thing called “quality education.” “*Beti pardao; beti*

bechao" ["Educate the girl child; save the girl child"], and other, similar slogans rang from political campaigns, media spotlights, NGO platforms, and school mission statements. I was first introduced to these historic, all-girls' Indian Public Schools on my previous trips to Jaipur when, on any given day, various locals – my auto-rickshaw driver, Hindi teachers, host parents, friends – would point out MGD as we passed its gates, identifying it by saying some combination of, "a very good school," "a royal school," or as my language partner, a local university student, put it, "that school for girls' empowerment and all." At times, however, these characterizations were then complicated when I asked who attended the school today. It was to this query, for example, that my classmate's host mother, an old alumna of the school and ex-Rajasthan University professor, waved her hand in the air and said rather dismissively,

"Oh…these days it's mostly filled with girls who are already empowered; they're very well-off, very privileged," she paused, stirring the *dal* reheating on the stove and then added, "But it's still a very good school, first of its kind."

Encounters such as these left me wondering how a school could be a venue of empowerment for those already deemed empowered. How did schools like MGD define, deliver, and own such missions? Where did they originate and how had they changed since their inception? And, more pressingly, who were these students and what were their ties to so-called "empowerment?"

Over my year of fieldwork on these campuses, one thing that emerged over and again was the relationship drawn between empowerment and privilege. As represented in the above interaction, it was extremely common in conversation or in more formal presentations to students for a conflation to occur between being "empowered" and being "privileged." Both were used almost interchangeably to mark a student's perceived socio-economic standing, family

background, consumption practices, education level, available social networks, and/or related future prospects. Empowerment itself became presented as *a kind* of capital, differentiated similarly as available in certain economic, social, cultural, or symbolic "types." Empowerment, in this sense, was made a privilege.

"You should know that you are all very privileged to go this school, built by the Rajmata, a school for the empowerment of girls," proclaimed one chief guest at MGD's career conference in front of an audience full of 11th Standard students.

"It's not so much for empowerment these days," offered an SKV teacher on another occasion, "these days, our girls are doing well. They may be coming from more conservative families, you can say, but their families are doing well. But we do have them participate in many programs, volunteer work, and the type, in the villages. So there is still this engagement with empowerment."

Who needs empowerment, who has access, what forms it takes, who can or should deliver it, and for how long? Such constructions often presented empowerment as a game meant only for the privileged. However, to be identified as such, marked as its symbol, and then tasked with empowering others, I posit, proved as much a kind of violence. In clumping groups of girls together (*e.g.* those attending Public Schools) and labeling them as similarly privileged and therefore already empowered, development agendas often do a disservice to many by simultaneously excluding and then make them the exemplars of their projects. Similar to the conditions at these schools' inception, girls may be privileged (*i.e.* of high socio-economic status, well-connected, etc.) without being or identifying as empowered. This was true of many of my student interlocutors. Firstly, for some, this was because they saw themselves as largely powerless in certain situations, interpersonal relationships, or decision making processes whether

because of their family dynamics, understandings of societal inequalities, or perceived personal shortcomings in skill or desire. As is the case, all-girls' Indian Public Schools and their female students problematize theories that argue for the seamless alignment of norms, approaches, and messages offered in school and those in (upper-)middle class homes. As examined in Chapter 2, many students experience disjuncture between the allowances and lessons taught at their school and those practiced and acceptable at home; while Chapter 3 displayed students variously describing their schools as comparably freeing or overly controlling. This contributes to a second point – for others, the schooling process itself was occasionally experienced as contradictory or disempowering due to school missions and the pressures of competition demanding they balance whole person education and extra-curriculars with standardized examinations that reward saying things in the "right way."

These requirements pitted Public School approaches against newer forms of educational privatization in tuitions and coaching. It left students feeling as though an "empowering" education, one that taught the importance of voice and process, for example, was at odds with the means necessary for gaining immediate success in the system at hand. There were similarly those who saw school presentations on choice or following your passions as diversely overwhelming, misaligned to similar lessons received on duty, or unrealistic in terms of societal or familial prescriptions on girls' roles and expectations post-graduation. Thirdly, still others saw these narratives of empowerment as generally unrelatable or contrived. These students may have variously identified as privileged but not as or by way of empowerment; and as such, they disengaged from or opted-out of such projects. Development discourses of empowerment in many ways assume that students who attend elite institutions will universally find their messages, methods, and goals, or the structures, systems, and institutions they support,

meaningful or beneficial. Yet the privileged can opt-out as well, not simply by way of entitlement but because they diversely struggle at times to see such platforms as necessary, tangible, or inclusive. That said, however, there were conversely a number of students at these schools who either *did* voice experiences of empowerment or felt overlooked by these projects *despite* not identifying as socio-economically privileged. Harm is inherent in each of these moments of misrecognition or misrepresentation.

All of this is to say three things. One, there is a need to be intersectional in understandings of empowerment and privilege. Whether a student identifies as upper-class, female, Rajput, Muslim, Bihari, a Public School product, etc. complicates their definitions and experiences but does not determine them. Two, there is in conjunction a need for more contextual, inclusive understandings of empowerment's targets, depictions, methods, and goals; a recognition that for many there are more powerful forms of privilege than empowerment, and more powerful forms of empowerment than privilege. There are also other ways to speak or experience empowerment that extend beyond those put forth by more "Western" or neoliberal notions of agency, the individual, choice, or action, beyond singular or pre-delineated forms. This study has indeed emphasized the powers inherent in individualized personhood and positionality, where empowerment recognized in the self may represent shifts in the distribution of power away from institutions or relational others. These schools can and did serve as social spaces for girls to develop self-worth, encounter female role models, engage in new opportunities and roles, build a social network of peers, and gain knowledge of past and present inequalities as well as the skills needed or desired for individual and collective change. However, this largely depended on how these messages were presented or received. Furthermore, this study has also greatly emphasized the powers of collectivities – of peer sociality, familial ties, and

social morality in individual determinations of empowerment. And three, I argue that for many students, empowerment was more about employing a learned set of skills or tools to mediate recurring moments of contradiction or difficulty, of recognized and enacted protocols and performances, and less about perceived "end" products (*i.e.* being empowered). Having the options, knowledge, and then the felt-power to choose, act, or interact as desired in a given situation, even in ways seemingly antithetical to the neoliberal self – *e.g.* choices made for the benefit of others, inaction, or disengagement – show how female students work within and without discursively prescribed structures of empowerment, mediating its meaning and use in an ongoing fashion. Empowerment in this sense is individual as well as relational, a discourse and practice that is defined over and again, more often than not devoid of isolation.

As such, it is necessary to focus on the these very processes, as students do not enter or leave all-girls' Public Schools already empowered, as much as popular rhetoric suggests. While there are those like Stromquist (2002) who contend that formal schooling can only establish the groundwork for achieving empowerment later in life, once certain dimensions like the economic and political are developed, I posit that empowerment exists only in moments of difficult deliberations, in its recurring yet distinct experiences or enactments, and as such is always in flux, not an attainable status. In this way, I suggest empowerment is more like Garfinkel's (2002) notion of praxis – it doesn't exist until it is produced in and through complex mutually recognizable social practices enacted by participants in social scenes. In this way, all-girls' Indian Public Schools diversely serve as venues for such contemplations and rehearsals, preparing their female students for a lifetime of contextually mediated empowerments.

Comparative Cases; Future Mediations

Given the broad, global network of institutions modeled after the British Public School, both in post-colonial settings and in a neo-colonial sense where "Western" forms of education still dominate what is considered "quality" or "elite," this study offers a comparative case to examine how such schools interact with local ideologies and systems of inequality, development, modernity, and the purposes of education along the lines of class and gender. With that said, though particular to the North Indian context, the arguments and issues raised here are not solitary or niche but represent fodder for overarching structural concerns in education internationally. Throughout my analysis of these historic Indian Public Schools in relation to development discourses and their alignments with privatization, high-stakes competition, and gendered and classed dichotomies, I found simultaneous debates occurring in the United States, Britain, Australia, Singapore, South Korea, and elsewhere. Debates concerning the rise of private and charter schools, the questionable "merit" of entrance exams, government intervention in institutional autonomy, the explosion of private coaching centers and tutoring, the violence of standardized examinations, the molding of successful yet disciplined subject-citizens, the stress experienced by teachers and students, and female students' performance ascendancy compared to their male counterparts despite structures of gendered inequality. What's more, as narratives concerning such global "trends," particularly in relation to South Asia, as the "feminization of labor," the "feminization of poverty," the "feminization of migration," and the "regendering of the state" through privatization and structural adjustment programs continue to emerge, it is necessary to understand how gender is continually implicated in neoliberal globalization processes, in how empowerment programs are written, and how schooling often becomes mobilized as a response. It is by examining these varyingly situated cases, these institutions and

their students, the living embodiments of these debates, that we may delve deeper into the complexities of such proverbial questions as – what are the purposes of schooling, what role do individual or collective identities play, what of power, and what's at stake?

I contend that this study has, in many ways, answered these questions within its contextual frame. But what's next for these schools, for MGD, SKV, Mayo Girls', and Welham Girls', what alterations in form and delivery will happen in the next decades; and particularly, what's next for their students, both within their walls and among those who have passed out, as they continue to encounter future moments of mediated empowerment? Through social media I have been able to stay in touch with a great number of students from all four schools, many of which have since gone on to enter 12th Standard, become school Captains, graduate, and pursue diverse post-graduate plans. It is in these encounters, in their experiences within or without higher education, careers, marriage, family, and friendship that a call for future analysis is in order to interrogate the relationships between what is taught and embodied at India's all-girls' Public Schools and what comes thereafter.

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APPENDIX A

Towards a Modern *Hindoostan*: Schooling a Classed, Gendered, and Educated "Indian" Identity

After early periods of Orientalist reform policies in the late 18th and early 19th centuries which succeeded in opening "indigenous" schools in vernacular languages, Utilitarian/Anglican and missionary critiques of the lacking morality of the natives led to changes in policy. British philosopher and imperial political theorist, James Mill, in his *The History of British India* (1817) set some of this early colonial discourse by detailing the levels of Indian (Hindoo) "barbarism" (the fact that Mill never visited India nor spoke any of its languages, was dealt with in the book's preface where he claims such *lack* of knowledge to be a virtue in objectivity). Mill posited that the measure of the Indian civilization's lack of progress was due to its superstitions, ignorance, and mistreatment of its women. Thus, alongside instituting orderly, lawful, and rational procedures of governance in accordance with the liberal ideals of the Enlightenment, the Raj saw itself as performing a "civilizing mission," especially against the atrocities perpetrated against women by educating the upper echelons of India's men.

Hoping to legitimize their stand on the subcontinent through a rhetoric of "saving" or "uplifting" the natives from their barbarousness,[91] a push for schooling similar to the English system came to the fore, especially in the Eastern regions of Bengal, the early seat of British imperial power. In 1834, Thomas Macauley's *Minute on Education* contended that while it was impossible for the British with their limited means to educate the body of the whole Indian people, by utilizing English as the medium of Indian education they could "form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood

[91] This barbarousness was argued by missionaries to be produced primarily out of religious superstitions and rituals, Brahmanism, and/or caste, often specific to region.

and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." Higher education and English medium schools were given primacy. Education was thought not only as a new way of governing and understanding the population but also of creating the bourgeois and liberal, individuated identity (Seth 2007). Macaulay also believed that Western education would lead Hindoos to forsake their religion and become moral Christians. After the reform had been implemented, though, the British soon began to complain that their Bengali pupils only saw Western education as a means to an end, a kind of instrumentalism (*i.e.* for higher income, dowries, and/or access to jobs within the imperial government), seldom valued in and of itself (*ibid.*). Students utilized rote memorization and cram methodologies, likened to "copying machines[92]." In many ways, this education did not fail so much as it began to backfire as this newly formed class of educated Bengali men were not easier to control but trying to gain access to positions of political power themselves, questioning British superiority.

Further frustrated by the effeminacy of the Bengali *babu*, found guilty of misusing their Western education, the British sought a new, more masculine and influential (*i.e.* perhaps more easily influenced) clientele in the martial races of India's princely states in the North and West (*e.g.* Rajputs and Marathas). At the height of Crown rule, over 40% of her territory was under the control of local rulers and maharajas (Shani 2006:20). The British would take direct charge of the education of India's future royalty, becoming the direct wards of young kings until they were invested with ruling powers at the age of 18, through personal English tutors and governesses, and by sending many abroad to boarding schools to be educated at the likes of St. Cyprian's, Ravenscroft, Eton, Harrow, Oxbridge, and Woolwich Military Academy. They saw themselves as counterweights to the overly privileged feudal and "womanly" influences of the home.

[92] That said, it has been argued that part of the reason for this was that the examinations were given in English, a foreign language on which many students did not yet have a firm grasp.

Princely families such as those of Baroda, Jaipur, and Cooch Behar, as represented by Maharani Gayatri Devi's life, were frequently sent abroad for their education as more "liberal" families. That said, Gayatri Devi (1995:86) recalls how her father, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar and former Etonion, advised his wife to educate their sons in India as "an English education was not suitable for an Indian and that in his own case it had left him ignorant of the country he had to rule." Similarly, others, such as the Scindias of Gwalior were less convinced of the positive effects of a "foreign" education. Maharani Vijaya Raje Scindia notes in her memoires that her father-in-law, Maharaja Madhavrao Scindia of Gwalior, was "particularly anxious that his son should not be sent to England for school but trained, as far as possible, to be familiar with the traditions and living conditions of his own people" (Scindia & Malgonkar 1985:126). Madhavrao Scindia's father too had expressed a wish that his son should be "brought up in the traditions of orthodox *kshatriya* Hinduism," yet protectorate Raj had different plans. They "rightly determined that it was their duty, as the guardian of a young prince who was to rule over several millions and whose wealth was enormous, to give him the best education procurable in both eastern and western learning" (*ibid*:106). This imperial duty had as its principle aim "to mould him in the image of the imperial ideal, the product of a British public school" (*ibid*.).

Eventually, the British saw an opportunity to create models of such schools *in situ*. Five boarding schools known as the "Chiefs' Colleges" were established within some of the subcontinent's princely states, exclusively for the education and grooming of the sons of chiefs, princes, and leading *thakurs* [landlords]. Similar in objective to their earlier, failed counterparts in the East, these residential schools were seen not only as paths to native moral uplift but ultimately as aids in the imperial project of control and legitimization of Western superiority and knowledge. Rajkumar College, Rajkot (1868); Daly College, Indore (1882); Rajkumar College,

Raipur (1882); Aitchinson College, Lahore (1886); and Mayo College, Ajmer (1875) (as well as later "feudal" schools such as The Scindia School, Gwalior (1897)[93]) found themselves charged with the duty of "providing for the sons of the ruling classes such an education as will fit them for the discharge of their responsibilities to their subjects" (Srivastava 1998:44).

Much more than the narrow curriculum it set forth to transmit, the Public School in its Indian incarnation aimed for the total transformation of a people – a transformation in morals, values, manners, and identity which emulated a 19th century Western ethos of rationality and reason. According to the British, these institutions remained the instruments of a labor of civilizing, yet this labor was not expected to lead to the complete (re)creation of the ideal for that would undermine the very narrative of superiority on which British imperialism was made legitimate. While the British Public School served as the ideal, much like the England-born man, the colonial Public School (and the India-born man) could only serve as mere echoes and imitations of the ideal:

> Along with several other manifestations of the cultural politics of the Empire, the colonial public school functioned as an indicator of the potency, vigour, and the inventive superiority of an island and a culture separated from its colonies by an oceanic barrier which was both navigable and impregnable according to need. (Srivastava 1998:4)

With the greatest compliment of all being imitation, the colonial Public School validated the power, preference, and authenticity of the European original (*ibid.*). This very sentiment was captured in the annual prize-giving speech in 1926 by the Principal of Mayo College, Ajmer, wherein he stated that "the English element in the College should not be overwhelmed by numbers if we are to *approximate* to our ideal of turning out products something only *faintly*

[93] Vijaya Raje Scindia decided to send her son, Madhavrao, to the Scindia School prior to sending him abroad to England for university at New College, Oxford (Scindia & Malgonkar 1985:183). It seemed that although Indian Public Schools provided a "privileged" education akin to feudal life at the time, universities abroad were seen as an needed escape from environments of "excessive flattery" if a ruler was to retain a level-head.

approximate to the English Public School boy, in acquirements and character" (Mayo College Magazine 1926, emphasis added).

While the Chiefs' Colleges were established to educate the Indian princely elite in more Western ways, the British on a whole found themselves once again disappointed with the progress and adjustment of their Indian pupils. It became apparent that the trappings of Indian feudalism, its princely regalia, servants, personal cooks, horses, and elephants, as well as upper caste anxieties over purity and pollution (*i.e.* refusing to eat, bathe, or interact with others from purportedly lower castes) and hierarchy (*i.e.* seating arrangements in assembly or the classroom according to the comparable prestige of one princely state over another) stood at odds with Western educational ideals of rationality, reason, and democracy. In recalling the time when one of her brothers, Indrajit, and future husband, Jai, the soon-to-be Maharaja of Jaipur, attended Mayo College in her memoire, for example, Maharani Gayatri Devi opines how although Viceroy, Lord Mayo, "had always wished that 'the sons of the aristocracy in India' might enjoy the benefits of an 'Eton in India,' [it] was not easy to transplant the idea of an English boarding-school into India, and the early masters there must have found it uphill work" (Devi 1995:106). She further recalls how "[a]t the time each boy was officially permitted to bring only three personal servants with [them], excluding grooms" but "[f]rom the start this rule was usually ignored, and many of the students lived in their own houses with a retinue of servants and with stables of dozens of horses," concluding, "It was a far cry from the rigorous dormitory living conditions of an English public school" (*ibid.*). However, if in the early days of the school's history the authorities had been unable to exercise the discipline that seemed desirable in a boarding school run on the English model, she qualifies, "things were quite different by the time Jai went there" when "[e]arly morning parades and sports were compulsory" (*ibid.*:108).

This difference between the "Occidental" and the "Oriental," including the primacy of the former, were inscribed into the campus's themselves (Srivastava 1998:45). In establishing the Chiefs' Colleges, many buildings on palace grounds of princely states or those once housing colonial government offices were put into use.[94] For others such as Daly College, Indore and Mayo College, Ajmer, new and extravagant buildings meant to represent the "bridging" of aesthetic cultures between the East and West were constructed in a style of architecture known as "Indo-Saracenic" that combined elements of Indo-Islamic (Mughal) and Indian architecture with that of Gothic revival and neo-classical styles in Europe on land donated by ruling families. Far from a simple movement toward parity in aesthetic blending, however, the Indo-Saracenic style served as yet another arena wherein the British could exert their symbolic supremacy over the native, a "spatial expression of an ideological intent" (Srivastava 1998:45). In his examination of the cultural politics of colonial architecture, Thomas Metcalf (1989) identifies how British imperial classification systems in understanding Indian culture and traditions solely based on religious terms with strict distinctions between Hindu and Muslim laid the ground work for the British to imagine themselves emblematic solvers of India's communal "problems." In this sense, the Indo-Saracenic architecture style represented the harmony Indians themselves could not achieve on their own (*ibid.*:75).

[94] For example, the Gwalior fort was the site of Tomar, Mughal, and Maratha power up from 15th through the 17th century when it then served as a British military cantonment prior to becoming the location for the Scindia School

Figure 42 Mayo College, Ajmer (est. 1875)

Figure 43 Daly College, Indore (est. 1885)

Outside of campus architecture, similar methods of trying to bridge yet control the divide between the East and West are evident in almost every aspect of the Chiefs' Colleges, from the schools' uniforms and curricula to which foods were served in the dining halls. Colonial methods

of discipline and representation of the male self and its other(s) at these early "Etons of the East" and "Harrows of the Orient" thus proved fragmentary, creating sites of a certain Indian male struggle for "authenticity" during the colonial period, those stuck between never being *truly* British nor *truly* Indian (Srivastava 1998:55).

The dichotomizing of self and other constructed through the mechanisms of "colonial difference[95]" (Chatterjee 1994) was about access gained and access restricted to certain identities, fit with qualities of personhood as well as power. The early project of the Chiefs' Colleges was about becoming more Western, modern, civilized, rational, and manly, among other things. Being that the end goal was not for students to move from fully "Indian" to fully "Western" identities, it created new sub-categories of self (*e.g.* the "Westernized Indian" or the "Anglo-Indian") and subsequent new categories of other. Those belonging to one such category of newly-created-other were male Indian intellectuals, often Western educated and belonging to reformist and nationalist groups such as the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal, who saw "feudal schools" such as the Chiefs' Colleges not as bastions of modern subjects-in-the-making, but of the backwardness and irrationality intrinsic to feudal customs, ritual, excess, and lineage-based hierarchies. Many critics saw these schools as cultivating a type of martial manliness based solely on physicality as opposed to a manliness of physique *and* intellect. The former, they claimed, would succeed in only recreating feudal lords subservient to a British imperial power, while the latter, believed as the true British Public Schooling model, once opened up to a larger population of India's male upper classes, would provide the training needed for leading a newly independent nation. The lesser than and fragmented sub-category of the "Westernized Indian" self, would be replaced by a category not at odds but on par with the ascendant British other. The "Educated Indian" (read Western educated) as much as the "Educated Britisher" would then

[95] The "rule of colonial difference" denoted the inferiority attributed to the colonized.

establish their privileged identity by othering the uneducated and illiterate of the country, *i.e.* the poor, the lower caste, and the female (and to a different degree, the rural and Muslim). While the Westernized Indian was a supposed mimic, going through the motions without a true understanding or embodiment of modernity, the Educated Indian was "emancipated," "liberated," seeking to define a newly independent form of Indian modernity.

Along these lines of thinking, the Chiefs' Colleges were slowly engulfed under a new governing body known as the Indian Public Schools Society (IPSS), formed by S.R. Das, lawyer, advocate-general of Bengal, and member of the Brahmo Samaj.[96] In his capacity as a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council under Lord Irwin, Das saw the IPSS as a way of establishing a *number* of Public Schools in India for students regardless of caste, social class, or religious background. It was to represent a modern, liberal, and elite schooling experience, erasing the purportedly "backwards" privileges and practices of feudal India while combining the rational ethos of an enlightened Western education with what were considered authentic Indian traditions by many nationalist thinkers. Though Das died prior to its establishment, his vision took form in The Doon School, Dehradun in 1935 which in the beginning catered largely to Punjab's rising "regional intelligentsia" or "provincial metropolitans" (*i.e.* the non-metropolitan industrial and engineering families) under the Headmastership of Arthur Foot, former science master at Eton and student of the British Public School, Winchester College, as well as Oxford and Cambridge Universities (Srivastava 1998:143; 40). A few years later as India moved closer to independence, it became apparent through public commentary that a reinvention of sorts was needed to address the "elitist" and aristocratic problems of residential schools as well as to discuss the formation of an association, the inadequate provision for examinations in Indian languages by the Cambridge

[96] Many of the Chiefs' Colleges such as Mayo College resisted integration into the IPSS for decades, claiming they wanted to retain their autonomy and solely feudal clientele.

Syndicate,[97] and the possibilities of integrating the Army and Military Schools under the IPSS. In June 1939, the Headmasters of four private North Indian schools met at Gorton Castle Committee Room in Shimla under the Chairmanship of Mr. J.P. Sargent, the Government of India's Educational Commissioner, resulting in the formation of the Indian Public Schools Conference (IPSC), modeled after a similar association of boarding schools in England. The collaborators of the IPSC believed that while early British models of Indian education failed due to their attempts at removing "Indian-ness" out of the upper class man, the Chiefs' Colleges were failing for going in the opposite direction by overly favoring the feudal whims of their princely clients. The integration of Indian traditions, dress, languages, and values proved essential to the Public School model's acceptance among India's upper caste/class families. In the same way, the inclusion of "Western" morals, ethics, discipline, rational scientific knowledge, and co-curricular activities were needed in order to produce a worldly and modern intelligentsia for a newly independent India. Products of an Indian Public School would therefore not only be "proud of their Indian heritage and culture" but exposed to the "latest learning processes" as they rose above undemocratic "parochialism[s] of religion, regionalism, languages and such forces which divide, rather than unite [the] country" (*IPSC Handbook 1964)*.

While the rhetoric of "blending" and "bridging" cultures within Public Schools can be understood as liberalism's tenet of universalism at work, at its foundation was a verification of the very existence of discursive dichotomies separating West/East, British/Indian, modern/ traditional, etc. on spectrums of differential power. There was a seemingly antithetical connection between the two "ideologies of the Raj," that is, between the "rule of colonial difference" and the Enlightenment meta-narrative which stressed the rational equality of

[97] The Senior Cambridge examinations were the curricula and examination framework established in Britain and internationally enacted in several Commonwealth countries. The system was largely superseded in 1972, with most schools replacing them with the Indian School Certificate of Secondary Education (ISCE) exams

mankind (Metcalf 1995). Mehta (1999), however, has posited that colonialism, far from negating liberal precepts, in fact stemmed from liberal assumptions about reason and historical progress – "assumptions which were only 'revealed' to a chosen people" (Shani 2006:26). In seeing India's population as backward or infantile due to its unfamiliar rituals and beliefs, the British created *racialized* hierarchies of difference, dissimilar to social class hierarchies of difference in their own country, thus establishing a "white man's burden" of uplifting the native to universal status. It wasn't until the Indian was "enlightened" that he could qualify for equal consideration within the liberal philosophy. Much of this determination of and progress toward Indian modernity manifested in political and cultural projects that first constructed and then separated the "public" from the "private" as spheres of reform and bastions of identity. Public Schools therefore became venues not only for British and Indian discourses of liberalism but for the regulation and reproduction of patriarchy in different class-caste formations.

APPENDIX B:

Student Demographics

Table 1

*Student's Home State**

Home State	n	%
Uttar Pradesh (UP)	196	19.25
Madhya Pradesh (MP)	89	8.74
Rajasthan	331	32.51
Haryana	27	2.65
Delhi	52	5.11
Jammu & Kashmir	7	0.69
Punjab	57	5.60
Bihar	44	4.32
West Bengal	34	3.34
Manipur	6	0.59
Orissa	8	0.79
Assam	19	1.87
Jharkhand	20	1.96
Maharashtra	13	1.28
Uttarakhand	32	3.14
Himachal Pradesh (HP)	4	0.39
Chhattisgarh	17	1.67
Gujarat	20	1.96
Kerala	1	0.10
Karnataka	2	0.20
Meghalaya	1	0.10
Nagaland	2	0.20
Tamil Nadu	1	0.10
Sikkim	2	0.20
Bhutan	1	0.10
Nepal	21	2.06
Bangladesh	2	0.20
Zambia	1	0.10
Nigeria	1	0.10
Australia	1	0.10
Thailand	1	0.10
Tibet	1	0.10
Lebanon	1	0.10

U.S.A.	1	0.10
Canada	1	0.10
Germany	1	0.10
No Answer	7	0.68
TOTAL	**1025**	**100.00**
North India Total	839	82.42
Outside India	33	3.24

* Average of all four schools

Table 2

Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya (SVK) Student's Home State

Home State	n	%
Uttar Pradesh (UP)	83	34.58
Madhya Pradesh (MP)	73	30.42
Rajasthan	8	3.33
Himachal Pradesh (HP)	1	0.42
Haryana	3	1.25
Delhi	8	3.33
Jammu & Kashmir	2	0.83
Punjab	1	0.42
Bihar	11	4.58
Chhattisgarh	15	6.25
West Bengal	7	2.92
Gujarat	2	0.83
Manipur	3	1.25
Orissa	3	1.25
Assam	3	1.25
Kerala	1	0.42
Jharkhand	11	4.58
Maharashtra	2	0.83
Nepal	2	0.83
Nigeria	1	0.42
TOTAL	**240**	**100**
North India Total	190	79.17
Outside India	3	1.25

Table 3

Welham Girls' School Student's Home State

Home State	n	%
Uttar Pradesh (UP)	75	30.99
Madhya Pradesh (MP)	3	1.24
Rajasthan	3	1.24
Himachal Pradesh (HP)	1	0.41
Haryana	12	4.96
Delhi	22	9.09
Jammu & Kashmir	1	0.41
Punjab	31	12.81
Bihar	17	7.02
Chhattisgarh	0	0.00
West Bengal	15	6.20
Gujarat	4	1.65
Meghalaya	1	0.41
Orissa	2	0.83
Assam	2	0.83
Karnataka	2	0.83
Jharkhand	4	1.65
Maharashtra	5	2.07
Uttarakhand	28	11.57
Zambia	1	0.41
Bangladesh	2	0.83
Australia	1	0.41
U.S.A.	1	0.41
Bhutan	1	0.41
Nepal	6	2.48
No Answer	2	0.83
TOTAL	**242**	**100.00**
North India Total	193	79.75
Outside India	12	5.00

Table 4

Mayo College Girls' School (MCGS) Student's Home State

Home State	n	%
Uttar Pradesh (UP)	28	13.33
Madhya Pradesh (MP)	9	4.29

Rajasthan	67	31.90
Himachal Pradesh (HP)	1	0.48
Haryana	6	2.86
Delhi	9	4.29
Jammu & Kashmir	3	1.43
Punjab	20	9.52
Bihar	6	2.86
Chhattisgarh	2	0.95
West Bengal	4	1.90
Gujarat	14	6.67
Nagaland	2	0.95
Orissa	1	0.48
Assam	11	5.24
Tamil Nadu	1	0.48
Sikkim	2	0.95
Jharkhand	2	0.95
Maharashtra	4	1.90
Uttarakhand	2	0.95
Lebanon	1	0.48
Tibet	1	0.48
Thailand	1	0.48
Canada	1	0.48
Nepal	11	5.24
Manipur	1	0.48
No Answer	3	1.43
TOTAL	**213**	**100**
North India Total	151	71.90
Outside India	15	7.14

Table 5

Maharani Gayatri Devi Girls' School (MGD) Student's Home State

Home State	n	%
Uttar Pradesh (UP)	10	3.05
Madhya Pradesh (MP)	4	1.22
Rajasthan	253	77.13
Haryana	6	1.83
Delhi	13	3.96
Jammu & Kashmir	1	0.30
Punjab	5	1.52

Bihar	10	3.05
West Bengal	8	2.44
Manipur	2	0.61
Orissa	2	0.61
Assam	3	0.91
Jharkhand	3	0.91
Maharashtra	2	0.61
Uttarakhand	2	0.61
HP	1	0.30
Germany	1	0.30
Nepal	2	0.61
No Answer	2	0.61
TOTAL	**330**	**100.00**
North India Total	303	92.38
Outside India	3	0.91

Table 6

*Student's Religion**

Religion	n	%
Sikh	53	5.24
Christian	1	0.10
Sindhi	5	0.49
Muslim	25	2.47
Din I Illahi	1	0.10
Sanamahi	1	0.10
Buddhist	4	0.40
Jain	52	5.14
Hindu	779	77.05
Hindu-Brahmin	7	0.69
Hindu-Rajput	9	0.89
Hindu-Marwari	5	0.49
Hindu-Punjabi	23	2.27
Hindu-Bengali	2	0.20
Hindu-Jat	3	0.30
Atheist	19	1.88
Agnostic	6	0.59
Secular	12	1.19
Half	4	0.40
No Answer	14	1.37

TOTAL	**1025**	**100.00**
TOTAL HINDU	828	81.90
Non-denom.	37	3.66

* Average of all four schools

Table 7

*Welham Girls' Father's Occupation**

Occupation	n	%
Doctor	23	9.58
Engineer/Scientist	7	2.92
Banker/Financial advisor	4	1.67
Accountant	9	3.75
Army/Merchant Marines	15	6.25
Lawyer	3	1.25
Politician/Advocate	7	2.92
Professor/School Admin	1	0.42
Teacher	3	1.25
Pilot	1	0.42
Business	162	67.50
Consultant	2	0.83
Architect	2	0.83
D.J.	1	0.42
Don't Know	2	0.83
TOTAL	242	100

*Data taken from student-reported surveys

Table 8

*Welham Father's Education Level**

Education Level	n	%
Class X	1	0.49
Class XII	2	0.98
Bachelors	49	24.02
Masters/Professional	117	57.35
Doctoral	35	17.16
Don't Know	38	15.70

TOTAL	242	100

*Data taken from student-reported surveys

Table 9

*Welham Girls' Mother's Occupation**

Occupation	n	%
Teacher	19	8.02
Professor/Lecturer/Reader	6	2.53
School Admin	3	1.27
Architect	2	0.84
Artist/Journalist	14	5.91
Service	4	1.69
Lawyer	1	0.42
Doctor	17	7.17
Chartered Accountant	5	2.11
Business/Entrepreneur	26	10.97
Part-time business	16	6.75
HR/Director of Co.	9	3.80
Total business	51	21.52
Housewife/Homemaker	115	48.52
No Answer	5	2.07
TOTAL	242	100.00

*Data taken from student-reported surveys

Table 10

*Welham Girls' Mother's Education Level**

Education Level	n	%
Working n=122		
Class X	1	0.93
Class XII	2	1.87
Bachelors	23	21.50
Masters/Professional	58	54.21
Doctoral	23	21.50
Don't Know	15	12.30
TOTAL	122	100

Housewives n=115		
Class X	0	0
Class XII	3	2.61
Bachelors	57	49.57
Masters/Professional	36	31.30
Doctoral	4	3.48
Don't Know	15	13.04
TOTAL	115	100

*Data taken from student-reported surveys

Table 11

*SKV Father's Occupation**

Occupation	n	%
Doctor	10	4.39
Engineer/Scientist	13	5.70
Banker	1	0.44
Accountant	2	0.88
Army/Merchant Marines	3	1.32
Lawyer	4	1.75
Politician/Advocate	5	2.19
Professor/School Admin	2	0.88
Design/Writer	2	0.88
Service	12	5.26
Business	163	71.49
Business-industrialist	1	0.44
Business-construction/real estate	6	2.63
Business-agriculturalist	4	1.75
Total business	174	76.32
Don't Know	12	5
TOTAL	240	100

*Data taken from student-reported surveys

Table 12

*SKV Father's Education Level**

Education Level	n	%
Class X	0	0.00

Class XII	7	3.93
Bachelors	45	25.28
Masters/Professional	104	58.43
Doctoral	22	12.36
Don't Know	62	25.83
TOTAL	240	100

*Data taken from student-reported surveys

Table 13

*SKV Mother's Occupation**

Occupation	n	%
Teacher	14	5.93
Professor/Lecturer/Reader	5	2.12
School Admin	3	1.27
Politician/Advocate	3	1.27
Service	2	0.85
Lawyer	1	0.42
Doctor	5	2.12
Banker	2	0.85
Business/Entrepreneur	19	8.05
Part-time business	4	1.69
Total business	23	9.75
Housewife/Homemaker	178	75.42
No Answer	4	1.67
TOTAL	240	100

*Data taken from student-reported surveys

Table 14

*SKV Mother's Education Level**

Education Level	n	%
Working n=58		
Class X	0	0
Class XII	0	0
Bachelors	9	15.52
Masters/Professional	27	46.55
Doctoral	13	22.41
Don't Know	9	15.52

TOTAL	58	100
Housewives n=178		
Class X	3	1.69
Class XII	11	6.21
Bachelors	72	40.68
Masters/Professional	43	24.29
Doctoral	7	3.95
Don't Know	41	23.16
TOTAL	177	100

*Data taken from student-reported surveys

APPENDIX C:

North India's Gender-Based Statistics

According to the 2011 Government of India Census, the country's average sex ratio was 940 females per 1,000 males. Of the 14 states and union territories *below* the national average, nine were from the North Indian region, with Delhi (n= 818), Chandigarh (n=868), and Haryana (n=879) taking the lowest spots. In the 10-year period during 2001-11, Rajasthan saw a 26-point drop in their child sex ratio arguably because of the rampant use of ultrasound technology for sex determination and abortion (Save the Children, 2014). As for literacy rates, the national average according to the 2011 Census was 74.04% (65.46% female and 80% male), while a 2012 UNESCO study set the national average for youth (15-24 years) literacy rates at 81.4% (74.4% female and 88.4% male). Some North Indian states and territories such as Delhi, Chandigarh, Haryana and Punjab did significantly better on this development scale. That being said, Rajasthan had the 3rd lowest literacy rate at 66.11% behind only Arunachal Pradesh and Bihar. Furthermore, these aggregate averages do not take into account the disparities between male and female literacy rates. If we continue with Rajasthan as our example, as the location of both MGD and Mayo Girls', the 2011 literacy rates for males was comparable to the national average at 80.51% while the female percentage was considerably dismal at 52.66%. In 2014, Save the Children launched a project on the status of the girl child titled, "The World of India's Girls Report," or WINGS. The report revealed that the proportion of out-of-school girls (aged 11-14 years) in Rajasthan had increased from 8.9% in 2011 to over 11% in 2012. At the upper-primary level, the enrollment rate for girls had fallen to below 60%. North India is consistently seen as the hub of these issues, having some of the lowest enrollment numbers and highest drop-out rates for girls in the country in addition to being popularly identified as one the few areas still

engaging in practices such as *purdah*, female foeticide, honor killings, dowry, and ascetic widowhood.

Table 1

States and Union Territories below the Average National Sex Ratio

State	n*
Chhandigarh	818
Delhi	868
Haryana	879
Jammu & Kashmir	889
Sikkim	890
Punjab	895
Uttar Pradesh (UP)	912
Bihar	918
Gujarat	919
Rajasthan	928
Maharashtra	929
Madhya Pradesh (MP)	931

* Numbers of girls out 100 boys

Table 2

States and Union Territories below the Average National Literacy Rate

State	Literacy Rate (%)
Bihar	61.8
Arunachal Pradesh	65.38
Rajasthan	66.11
Jharkhand	66.41
Andhra Pradesh (AP)	67.02
Jammu & Kashmir	67.16
Uttar Pradesh (UP)	67.68
Madhya Pradesh (MP)	69.32
Chhattisgarh	70.28
Assam	72.19
Orissa	72.87
National Average	**74.04**

APPENDIX D:

"Secular" Spaces: the Religious, the Scientific, and the Natural

Secularism is frequently associated with discipline, modernity, and the upper-classes, a metropolitan cosmopolitanism, particularly in India. With that said, the type of secularism practiced at these schools is in turn particularly Indian in character. While elsewhere secularism may materialize through a division of the public and private, secular space in India frequently takes form by publicly considering all religions. In most English Public Schools, "religious worship was, more often than not, enshrined in the school constitution" (Srivastava 1998:86), as the Christian faith was believed to instill a kind of disciplined morality. In India, however, public religiosity was to be avoided, related to communalism, the uneducated, rural, lower classes and linked with the home, considered an undisciplined and feminized space. Secularism became espoused not only as a path toward modernization under British rule, but later as a path toward Indian independence. Out of this nationalist discourse, however, Indian secularism became underwritten by particular Hindu worldviews, values, and practices as multi-religious causing the Indian Public School campus to become an extension of a "sacred complex" (Vidyarthi 1961), from its centralized, larger temples and scattered, smaller *mandirs* to the more natural sacred elements littered across its spaces.

Thus, though Indian Public Schools by affiliation are required to be strictly "secular," most campuses have a great deal of religious or sacred iconography, particularly at schools like MGD, SKV, and Mayo Girls', which retain proud ties to their high-caste (*i.e.* Hindu), feudal roots.[98] These campuses display mainly Hindu iconography with some Christian and Islamic

[98] While the larger boys' schools such as Mayo College, Daly College, and The Scindia School have formal spaces of worship directly on their campuses or close by on affiliated lands for a variety of denominations – Islamic mosques, Hindu temples, and Sikh *gurudwaras* – all-girls' schools such as MGD, SKV, and Mayo.

symbols, usually on behalf of the schools' founders or the former landowners such as Miss Lutter's grave at MGD or the *nawab*'s wife's grave at Welham Girls'. The primacy of Hindu religiosity and world view and its elision with Indian "culture" writ large is particularly noticeable in the spatial centrality reserved for its symbols. At Mayo Girls', a large temple dedicated to Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge, the arts, music, and learning, is located at the very heart of campus. The road entering campus immediately directs your attention through the main building's open veranda to the temple and mountains beyond. The entirety of the school wraps around drawing continuous sightlines. During certain hours, members of the school community can visit the temple; and a number of students informed me that the night before an exam many leave their books, pens, IDs, or university admissions cards at the temple in order to garner Saraswati's blessings and good favor.

Figure 44 Saraswati mandir, Mayo Girls'

Annually, the school celebrates the Hindu festival, Vasant Panchami, through a Saraswati *puja* at the campus temple during which outside pundits are invited to make offerings and perform the appropriate rites, while members of the school are invited to participate. School captains also

become involved, walking around the temple performing *aarti*, tying cotton strings on students' wrists [*kalava*], and collecting offerings. Though the temple is open to everyone yet no one is forced to attend, there is something to the spatial centrality of the temple on campus and the legitimizing involvement of student leaders in the rites that undermine certain "secular" claims of the school, even as many point to school celebrations of Christmas, Lohri, and Eid al-Fitr, as proof of their secularism.

Figure 45 School Captain performing *aarti* and collecting offerings at Mayo Girls' Saraswati puja, 2014

Beyond Mayo Girls' central temple, one additionally finds smaller temples across campus. Similar to MGD's and SKV's campuses, these smaller temples are hidden down winding paths, often in close relation to teachers' quarters/offices or in areas highly frequented by the schools' domestic help and grounds keepers. Below we see a small *mandir* [temple] on Mayo Girls' campus, located back behind the tennis courts, as well as a secluded space of prayer on SKV's campus featuring small *mandirs* to the Hindu gods, Shiva, Ganesha, and Hanuman,

situated behind the school's art wing down a highly vegetated path canopied by the downward growing branches of several banyan trees.

Figure 46 (*left*) Small Shiva mandir (*Om Namah Shivaya*), Mayo Girls'
Figure 47 (*right*) Ganesha mandir, SKV

Outside of these structures, the trees themselves and natural spaces are also commonly worshiped by certain followers of Hinduism, particularly in North India. Sacred trees such as the banyan (thought to represent Lords Shiva, Rama, and Krishna in different ways), pipal (Lord Vishnu), neem, asoka, and so forth have a certain spiritual presence on the four campuses. Pipal trees at Mayo Girls' are frequently wrapped with cotton strings as a cloth offering [*vastra-dan*]. As in the Hindu festival of Raksha Bandan where girls wrap their brothers' wrists with string for protection, it is a way of both protecting the tree and asking for its protection in return (Haberman 2013:88). Banyan trees on these campuses often had such strings wrapped around them as well. While a largely Hindu practice, even students of other denominations frequently told me that the age of the trees made them special and at times eerie, powerful, proof of their

schools' heritage. Such was the case at SKV in students' referencing the huge banyan tree behind Kamla Bhavan.

Figure 48 (*left*) Banyan tree wrapped with offerings, Mayo Girls'
Figure 49 (*right*) *Bai jis* beneath MGD's main asoka tree, also wrapped with religious threads

While brother schools were imbued with moments and symbols of religiosity too, such as Scindia's evening meditation sessions [*astachal*], the frequency of such ritualized moments of religious performativity (*e.g.* offering *aarti* to chief guests) remain highly feminized.

Aside from the religiously imbued spaces on campus, there is also a deliberate focus on the scientific (*i.e.* rational). These schools place great efforts on controlling the natural through intensive landscaping, watering and mowing of grassy lawns in the middle of desert regions, maintaining various water features, rose gardens, and guava orchards, as well as decorating various areas with potted plants to signal wealth and status along with the power over the natural landscape. The buildings themselves, typical of hotter regions, are designed to bring the outside in through the natural circulation of light and air. Classroom buildings are often only one room

deep with hallways located outside while residential spaces are arranged around central courtyards. In addition to having solar panels on a few of their buildings, Welham Girls' main outdoor auditorium is more a fantastic open-air brick amphitheater covered by a steel trussed roof while Mayo Girls' auditorium doubles as a performing arts center. In these designs, and the intermingling student projects, we see a desire to organize and regulate, to make rational the chaotic. While trees may represent something sacred to many on these campuses, schools and student clubs have also labelled them by scientific names in a practice of categorization. As such, Public Schools while embracing the secular/spiritual also strive to achieve a kind of spatialized scientific rationalism, not only as educational institutions but as a way of differentiating themselves from disorderly, undisciplined "others."

Figure 50 Mayo Girl' signage identifying pipal tree by scientific name