

## ‘Re-formed’ Women and Narratives of the Self Shetty Parinitha

Krupabai Sathianadhan’s novel, *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life*,<sup>1</sup> was first published posthumously in 1895.<sup>2</sup> More than a century later Oxford University Press reissued the novel under the altered title *Saguna: The First Autobiographical Novel by an Indian Woman*.<sup>3</sup> The new title, along with the altered paratextual context, substantially reconstitutes the reader’s reception of the text. Paratexts act as significant regulatory devices, shaping the transactions between texts and readers, indicating the historical location of the text, the location of its dissemination and circulation, and the historically specific set of intentions that situate a text for a distinct reading public with particular intended effects.<sup>4</sup> The paratextual reissue of Sathianadhan’s novel invites a return to historically available discourses, a revision of the repertoire of narrative self constructions, and the legitimated practices of femininity that made possible the writing and shaping of the female autobiographical *I* in late nineteenth-century India. The twenty-first century reader’s simultaneous access to both editions of *Saguna* works to historicize the novel and makes possible a textual self-reflexivity, which, I would argue, undermines its representational transparency as an autobiographical novel.

Throughout the nineteenth century, upper caste/class women were appropriated re-formed and re-cast in the service of Hindu social and religious reform, missionary proselytizing, British colonialism and, later in the century, Indian Nationalism. The formation and reform of the nation was, very significantly, developed alongside the “re-forming” of the upper caste/class woman’s modes of access to what was constituted “education”: the structures of her familial and sexual relationships, the spaces she could and could not occupy and the ways in which she could occupy them. The “woman question,” which was central to the male-operated reform movements of the century, centered on what could be

done to ameliorate the condition of the “new Indian woman.” The social evils of child marriage, sati, and the re-marriage of widows, which were the focus of missionary, colonial and reformist interventions applied to the lives of upper-caste/class women in some regions. But within the reform debates these issues were expanded to encompass all women who inhabited the abstract space of the nation. The “new woman” who emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century was a marker of the “re-formed” nation. Education had modernized her and enabled her to remake the private sphere. She was a companion to her husband who was, most often, a Christian evangelist and/or an official in the colonial bureaucracy or educational system. She also had access, albeit under careful male supervision, to some areas of the public sphere.<sup>5</sup> Her so-called emancipation was structured as a movement from the dark, oppressive confines of the *zenana* into the open enlightened spaces of the school, the church, the drawing room, and the women’s organization. Here, under the tutelage of her husband, father, or brother and with their approval she came into a “realization” of her true potential as enlightened mother, wife/companion and saviour of women who had not yet had access to the privileges that she now enjoyed. This was the standard plot trajectory of the reformist narratives available to women of the upper caste/class, and, if they chose to change or challenge them, they had to face the censure and withdrawal of male support.

A number of these formulaic autobiographies were written by women in the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The historical conjuncture that made space for and necessitated the sculpting of this autobiographical female self also made available to these women the skills and techniques needed for such self-fashioning and self-display and decreed the contours that this self could take. But as women entered material and discursive spaces hitherto closed to them they changed these spaces, whether consciously or unconsciously.<sup>7</sup> As reform-era women were appropriated by male reform agendas and made a part of male political maneuverings, they were confronted with the liminal spaces they occupied and the contradictions that frayed the seams of their lives.<sup>8</sup> I argue that this doubled-subjectivity fissured given notions of self and agency, which in turn pushed women to critique accepted practices of “being

women.” Autobiographical writing, I suggest, also allowed women to explore an incipient agency that was both apart from, and simultaneously within the male reformist agendas and patriarchal coercions that they were participating in and colluding with. Very often, the narration of this female self was not coterminous with the dominant narrations of the “national woman.” For Saththianadhan this disjuncture between nation and self is further aggravated by her adopted Christian religion. The narrative *I*, as author and subject of the autobiography, occupies an extra-textual material location while it is simultaneously positioned as a subject of/in discourse. In the case of Saththianadhan’s text, as well as her life, both locations are tenuous, beleaguered, and liminal. They come into existence through a complex process of negotiation with, appropriation of, and rejection of available modes of being and thinking of oneself as an “Indian woman.”

The 1895 edition of Saththianadhan’s autobiographical novel is embedded in a dense paratextual context. Dedicated to Mrs. H.B.Grigg,<sup>9</sup> it is prefaced by an obituary of Saththianadhan by Mrs. R.S.Benson. The novel is followed by an appendix, which contains a summary of the speeches made and decisions taken at

[A] largely attended Drawing-room meeting [was] held at Government House at 5:30 PM, on Wednesday the 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1895 under the presidency of Her Excellency Lady Wenlock, to consider what steps should be taken to perpetuate the memory of the late Mrs. Samuel Saththianadhan, the gifted authoress of “Saguna” and “Kamala.” (Appendix 233)

This contextualizing is followed by a collection of reviews by individuals, newspapers and journals of *Saguna* and Saththianadhan’s other novel, *Kamala*. These texts, which surround the novel, function both as a prism and as a document; they refract as well as reinforce the context of the autobiographically-shaped uniqueness and autonomy of the subject of the novel *Saguna*. Memoir, testimonial, obituary, and first-person account intersect to constitute an ideal of the Christian/Reformed Hindu—Saththianadhan’s educated “new woman” self, which is both validated and undermined by the fictional autobiography.<sup>10</sup> Saththianadhan’s self-

fashioning through her protagonist Saguna is to a great extent complicit with the orientalist/evangelical/reformist lens of these paratexts that envelop the novel. As discourses that enabled and decreed the construction of the “Indian Woman,” they share strategic alliances and are informed by certain common interests that cut across their differences.<sup>11</sup> But Sathinadhan’s novel is a complex combination and contradiction of truth effects. The novel simultaneously colludes with and interrogates its paratexts. It opens with this claim:

In the following pages, I shall in my own way try to present a faithful picture of the experiences and thoughts of a simple Indian girl, whose life has been highly influenced by a new order of things—an order of things which at the present time is spreading its influence to a greater or lesser extent over the whole of her native land. (*Saguna* 1998 19)

The narrative *I* rejects autobiographical uniqueness of subjectivity and ascribes to itself the generic anonymity of a “simple Indian girl.” The narrator represents her autobiography as the story of a nation’s agonistic relationship with a new order of things as inscribed on the life of An ordinary young woman. The transgressive act of assuming the authority of authorship and authoring the female self is redeemed by this tactic of fictionalizing and deindividuating the self. The framing paratext employs a similar strategy, effacing the radically subversive possibilities of Sathianadhan’s English education, her intellectual and literary capacities. Sathianadhan’s obituary is primarily located within the home and is circumscribed by normative and feminine attributes and roles that belong within the home. Moreover, “her talents” are yoked to these feminine qualities. As an agent of “enlightenment to her countrymen” she becomes the agent of a middle-class, Victorian ideal of femininity. In Mrs. R. S. Benson’s hagiographic reconstruction Sathianadhan is described as follows:

Her intellect she cultivated with zeal, and with so much success that she passed her medical examinations with honors. In her home and married life, she was all that is ideal as wife and

mother, companion and friend. The talents, that with health might have been used to alleviate the sufferings of others, found a vent, when her health failed, in writings which revealed to her countrymen, better perhaps than practical work would have done, the beauty and culture of her mind, and its noble aspirations for their enlightenment. With all the praise and publicity which her writings brought her she remained throughout most modest, retiring, sensitive and gentle. (*Saguna* 1895 viii)

The novel is the autobiographical narrative of the life of its fictional protagonist Saguna who *is* and *is not* Saththianadhan, the author of *Saguna*. As the title of the Oxford edition of the novel states, it is an *autobiographical* novel. There are very few names and dates in the novel, which, within a realist epistemology, are crucial for authenticating the life stories of embodied subjects. But the few names that appear in the novel and the temporal sequencing of events through which the life of Saguna is constructed closely approximate, even replicate the biographical construction of Saththianadhan's life, which is made available in the form of paratext in both issues of the novel. The generic distinction between biography and novel has been established, predominantly, on the basis of the extra-textual historical facticity of the biographical subject and the fictionality of the character in the novel. Yet, the realist novel, the biography and the autobiography produce similar reality effects through the use of similar literary devices. Though they can be differentiated on the basis of a divergent identification among author, protagonist and narrator; as subjects achieved in language the author, protagonist and narrator are distinct to the extent that they perform individual narrative functions. Further, I would suggest that the generic indefiniteness of Saththianadhan's autobiographical novel aligns it in a simultaneously refractory and coterminous relationship with its paratexts in the complex construction of the subjectivity of Saththianadhan/Saguna. The subject of the autobiographical novel, Saguna, is dispersed across several locations. She is situated within the text as the subject of the narrative as well as the narrating subject. Her narrative structure closely replicates the biographical structuring of Saththianadhan the author, who is also an em-

bodied being occupying a materially specific geographical and historical location. The paratext of the modern edition biographically constructs Sathianadhan and intimately connects her with Saguna by generically designating the novel as an autobiography. According to Benson, “In the pages of *Saguna* the authoress tells the story of her own early life” (*Saguna* 1895 vii). The shifting multiplicity of Sathianadhan/Saguna’s states of being, alongside their instability, allows for a reading that critiques the ascribed national/colonial identities of Saguna/Sathianadhan, dismantles these identities, and displays the strategic uses to which they are put. If, as autobiography, the text gestures towards an extra-textual life which it is authentically represents, as autobiographical fiction it takes the liberty of reshaping the contours of that represented life so as to encompass or open out to emancipatory possibilities of being without cracking the illusion of representational transparency. I locate the historical Sathianadhan’s agency in this possibility of authorial reshaping. One such instance of authorial reshaping in the novel is the h(er)istory of her father’s conversion. The event of Harichandra’s conversion and the spiritual conflicts resulting from his decision to convert, forms a significant part of the early history of his life. *Saguna* introduces the history of her parents’ early lives in the following manner:

Before proceeding further with my story, I think it necessary to give a short sketch of the early history of my parents, with special reference to the spiritual struggles through which they had to pass, before giving up the religion of their ancestors. This will throw some light on the influences that were at work in our simple home, and will show how our lives and characters were moulded. The pictures that I am about to present are more or less reproductions of those depicted to me in their simple, unaffected manner by my mother and by my eldest sister, who entered into my father’s thoughts and feelings, and who, though a daughter, was a companion and a friend to him. (*Saguna* 1998 27)

The history that follows is almost completely narrated by the third-person omniscient narrator. This perspective, however, is invaded by,

and encompassed within the conventions of the autobiographical *I*. In an act of ventriloquism, the autobiographical *I* projects the narrative perspective on the characters of the wife and the daughter of the convert who are positioned in differing relationships to the convert and his conversion. Through the complex intermingling of narrative voices and perspectives Saguna/Satthianadhan rewrites the "conversion story" that had hitherto been narrated, almost exclusively, by men.

The story of the conversion of Satthianadhan's father, Hari Ramachandra Khisty, had been narrated in Khisty's Marathi biography, *Life of the Late Rev. Hari Ramachandra Khisty*, written by his son-in-law the Reverend Appaji Bapuji Yarde. An excerpt from this book, translated into English, was included in an anthology of conversion narratives, titled *Sketches of Indian Christians Collected from Different Sources*, published by the Christian Literature Society of India, with an introduction by Samuel Satthianadhan, Krupabai's husband. With the exception of one narrative, that of Pandita Ramabai, the thirty-eight conversion stories anthologized in this book are all by and about men. In each of these narratives, conversion is invariably constructed as result of an epiphanic vision of the rational monotheism of Christianity with a concomitant revelation of the superstitious idolatry of Hinduism. This revelation inevitably follows upon the soon-to-be-convert's entry into the institutions of colonial or missionary education and is a consequence of the non-coercive or the providentially coercive persuasions of the Christian missionary or teacher. In every instance, conversion results from a decision taken voluntarily by the convert. The ensuing life of sacrifice and struggle of the new convert is modeled on the sufferings of a Christian martyr.<sup>12</sup>

Satthianadhan/Saguna's narration of her father's conversion closely follows Yarde's in its narrative trajectory and many of the narrative details are similar. Nevertheless, there are significant points of departure. Yarde's narrativization of Radhabai's response to, and her acceptance of, her husband's conversion is much less detailed and complex than Satthianadhan/Saguna's narrativization of Radha's conversion. In Yarde's story, the most painful event that Radhabai faces prior to her conversion is the baptism of her daughter: "After a time a little daughter was born

to them. Much grieved was she on learning that her husband wished the child to be baptized, and she spent the day of the baptism in mourning over her baby's fate" (*Sketches* 191). Embedded within the narrative of the conversion of Ramachandra Khisty, and narrated throughout by the omniscient narrator as a document of personal history, Radhabai's conversion in Yarde's narrative is subsumed and controlled by the conversion of her husband. In contrast, Saththianadhan/Saguna's construction of Radha's transitional subjectivity as convert-to-be is much more complex. It takes place at the intersection of multiple narrative voices, interrogating, rebutting, colluding, and conniving with each other. The story of Radha's conversion as narrated by Saththianadhan/Saguna never achieves narrative closure as it does in Yarde's biography of Radhabai's husband. Yarde's narrative glosses over the intensely traumatic experience of deracination suffered by the convert's wife as a result of the radically liminal locations she is forced to occupy in the wake of her husband's conversion.<sup>13</sup>

Yarde plots Radhabai's narrative mobility as always already oriented towards becoming "a true helpmate to her husband, and [she was] all that a true Christian wife should be" (*Sketches* 191). The resolution of her transitional state of being as convert-to-be is narratively constituted, as a spatially linear movement from her natal Hindu home in Satara to her husband's Christian home in Ahmednagar ("Haripunt was very anxious to have Radhabai his wife brought from Satara before the tidings of his change of religion should get abroad" 191). Yet at another level her transition is constituted as a temporally linear development in knowledge and faith towards the acceptance of Christ and Christianity: "By patient teaching and earnest prayers on her behalf, Radhabai was at last led to accept Jesus as her saviour. When 19 years of age she was baptized in 1841" (191). What marks the Radhabai of Yarde's narrative is her passivity and lack of agency.

Conversely, in *Saguna* Radha's reluctant acceptance of Christianity is detailed at greater length and involves a complex orchestration of narrative voices. The story of Radha's conversion in *Saguna* sketches the complicated negotiations that take place, focusing on the changes that occur in and through the convert, as well as between her former religion



and her adopted one, and between the community from which she was ostracized and the community into which she was "reborn." The critically alienating perspective enabled by Saththiandhan's tenuous location informs this narrative; it becomes a subversive method of critiquing the patriarchal authorities that try to form and re-form her.

The conversation between Harichandra and his brother Vaman Rao about the ways and means to be used in bringing Radha to her converted husband is illustrative of this narrative complexity (*Saguna* 1998 56–7). Here the impersonality of the third-person narrative is infected/inflected by a split contradictory perspective that fissures the conversion story and consequently the hero of the conversion story, the convert.<sup>14</sup> The ventriloquist autobiographical narrator projects the fissured halves of her narrative perspective on Harichandra and his brother Vamanrao, thus redeeming both conversion and the convert from the sin of patriarchal coercion and deceit. Harichandra's complicity in the violent act of compelling his unwilling wife to accept his conversion is effaced by its representation as a reluctant assent to the machinations of his brother Vamanrao, given in the face of the far more grievous suffering that Radha would have to bear if left at the mercy of Hindu patriarchy. Confronted by Harichandra's reluctance to use coercion and deceit on his wife his brother Vaman Rao retorts:

Then give her up forever ... Make her life a life of misery. Her head will be shaved, and she will become an object of scorn. Wherever she is seen, people will exclaim: "Ah! This is the polluted one's wife; this is the unfortunate woman whom the gods have disgraced." Life will become a living death for her, and you will be cursed forever in her heart. You will like that, I suppose? What has she done to suffer such wrongs from you? If you take her with you, she may in time come to fall in with your way of thinking, and she will be happy. (*Saguna* 1998 56–7)

Yarde's explanation of Radhabai's willingness to live with her Christian husband is blunt: "For sometime she held herself aloof from Christians and their religion, but believing her husband was in the place of God to her, she determined to live with him whatever differences they might

have as to religion” (*Sketches* 191). It becomes an oblique critique of the repressive hierarchies mandated by Hindu patriarchy when re-narrated by Saththianadhan as follows:

He [Vaman Rao] requested his brother to be ready at a certain place with the missionary’s covered carriage, which would carry Radha straight off to the bungalow before suspicion was roused, adding: “All that you have to do is to be very stern and order the girl in. Thanks to our customs, she will be very frightened to see you alone with her, and won’t get over the shock till she sees the bungalow, and even if she attempts to talk and ask questions on the way, a word from you will silence her.” (*Saguna* 1998 56)

Unlike Yarde’s story, Saththianadhan/Saguna’s story of Radha’s forced, reluctant meeting with and acceptance of her convert husband is narrated in great detail:

She was silent, and kept furtively looking at him and out of the window. But when the carriage stopped at the bungalow of the missionary, she was aghast. Her husband’s voice fell on her dazed ear, “Radha, get down.” She instinctively obeyed, and looked round, wondering if it was all a dreadful dream, but before she could realize her situation, she found herself following her husband into a room, and the door closed on her. Everything seemed clear now. This was the *padre sahib’s* house, and she had entered it, she a Brahmin. What pollution! What degradation! A time of intense anguish followed. In her first impulse she tried to push open the door, and shook the bars of the window; but when she found herself powerless, she sat down on the floor quivering with anger, and with the sense of some great wrong done to her. Her tears had fled, and she tried to think what her position was, but she could not analyse her thoughts. A sense of shame overwhelmed her at the thought that her husband, in her eyes the very perfection of humanity, should have brought her to this disgraceful place. What

was he about? And yet in the midst of all these overwhelming thoughts the undercurrent of trust and confidence in him was not shaken. She thought of the past two years during which she had watched him closely. Whatever his elder brother was, her husband was upright and just; his word was never broken, and he was never known to do anything mean. But what did *this* act signify? To impute any low motive to him was to break everything that she held dear; she felt humbled to the dust. This humiliation was, however, followed by an overexcited state of mind. Her soul rebelled against what seemed mean, wicked, and debasing, and the gentle Radha was for the time changed into an avenging angel, who shot her glances and words with withering scorn at her husband. (*Saguna* 1998 59)

Abiding by the rules of the formulaic narrative of conversion, Sathianadhan reconfigures and enlarges it so as to reshape the contours of the conversion story. In the novel, the story of the conversion is narrated by Saguna who disowns authorial conception of it, for, as she claims, she is reproducing exactly what has been recounted to her by her mother and sister. In contrast to the posthumously reconstructed Sathianadhan, in the paratext the wife and daughters reconstruct the father posthumously. By constructing and relating his story they usurp his patriarchal prerogative to authorial agency. This illegitimate act of authoring the husband and the father is followed by other acts of female transgression. One example can be found in the rewording of silences in male conversion narratives. In Sathianadhan/Saguna's narrative, Radhabai's acceptance of Christianity is a long and difficult process. It is achieved through coercion and never completed as she retains the "Hindu notion of things" in spite of a "strong faith in her new religion" (np). The convert takes recourse to what is seen as a Hindu patriarchal subjection of women to unquestioned obedience to and dependence on their husband to force her into accepting his life. The later companionate marriage of Radha and Harichandra, which is shown as a result of their mutual acceptance of Christianity, cannot efface the dark history of patriarchal coercion. The difficult, violently imposed, never complet-

ed, conversion of Radha fills in what is left unsaid in Yarde's narrative of Radhabai's conversion.

As she rewords the silences in the male versions of the conversion narrative, Saththianadhan /Saguna also appropriates it to articulate a personally emancipatory and enabling subjectivity for herself. Harichandra's conversion becomes the site on which Saththianadhan contests the regulatory powers and legitimacy of her secular feminine identities and re-articulates for herself a Christian identity that restructures her possibilities of being in the secular world in liberating ways. Professedly "reproducing," but insidiously re-producing the spiritual conflicts of Harichandra, Saththianadhan/Saguna usurps the narratively-constructed space of her father's consciousness to structure her relationship with God-the-Father:

In other words, it dawned upon him gradually that the idea of a personal God, one whom we can look upon in the relation of a father was entirely absent in the systems of philosophy which he studied. "Oh what a consoling thought it would be," said he to himself, "if such a relationship between the infinite and the finite, the all-wise, the all-perfect, the infinitely good creator and the imperfect, sin-stained and fallible mortal were possible. How easy it would then be for man with the help of this higher power to satisfy his nobler longings and aspirations! But ah! why is it that this view of the relation of God to man which seems to me to be the most true view, inasmuch as it helps me to satisfy that impulse which I find so strong within me-why is this view entirely absent in the Hindu religion?" (*Saguna* 1998 50)

Protestant subjectivity, constructed in the process of the believer's individual spiritual conflicts and colloquies with God, is liberating for Saththianadhan/Saguna. The "idea of a personal God" to whom the devotee has unmediated, unrestricted, private access, whose human manifestation understands and whose divinity sanctions the devotee's worldly "longings and aspirations," is a utopian re-formation of the patriarchal father. I would suggest that here Saththianadhan/Saguna undertakes au-

thoring the father whose being is legitimated by an unquestioned overt acceptance of a prerogative to authorship. The undermining of his divine status by a rationalist critique is one of the major crisis in Saguna/Sathianadhan's life (*Saguna* 1998 162).

The material benefits that the Christian convert accrues can be seen in the radically transformed mobility of Saguna. At the time Sathianadhan was writing, Christianity in conjunction with colonialism was opening specific areas of the public sphere to women.<sup>15</sup> Hence, Saguna's entrance into spheres, spaces, and professions hitherto unoccupied or sparsely occupied by women maps the pioneering mobility of the historical Sathianadhan and an elite class of women. Sathianadhan/Saguna locates conversion, to use Gauri Vishwanathan's words, "at the nexus of spiritual and material interests."<sup>16</sup>

In her own time, Sathianadhan's autobiographical novel was appropriated in different ways to serve different interests, as seen from the paratext that surrounds the nineteenth-century publication of the novel. In the twenty-first century I read this novel as retrieved for me by its modern editor, Chandani Lokuge, and its modern publishers (Oxford) from my own professional location within the academy. Sathianadhan's narrative encourages and enables me to read conversion narratives of the present, against the grain.

## Notes

- 1 I will henceforth refer to this novel as *Saguna* 1895.
- 2 Lokuge, the editor of the *Oxford* edition of the novel, gives the year of publication of the novel as 1895. But, Joshi gives the year of publication of the novel as 1892. I have retained Lokuge's date in my paper.
- 3 I will henceforth refer to this edition of the novel as *Saguna* 1998.
- 4 Referring to the ways in which the paratext of the 1895 edition of *Saguna* orients our reading of it, Joshi writes: "Indeed, given the physical layout of Sathianadhan's books (which was supervised by her husband, Samuel), to read her work was first to learn *how* to read it (from Mrs. Grigg) and then *what* to make of it from its reviewers" (174).
- 5 Forbes quotes an incident that appears in Manmohini Zutshi Sahgal's book, *An Indian Freedom Fighter Recalls Her Life*. When Sahgal was jailed in Lahore in 1930, a fellow demonstrator was arrested along with her while her husband was at work. When her husband came to know about the arrest he sent word

- asking her not to return home after her release. When asked for the reason behind this order he said that “it was a great honour to have his wife arrested, but she had not asked his permission to leave the house” (121).
- 6 Some of the memoirs and autobiographies written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were *Amar Jiban* (My Life) by Rashundari Dei (1876), *Amchya Ayushyatil Kabi Athawani* (Memoirs of our Life Together) by Ramabai Ranade (1910), *Autobiography of an Indian Princess* by Maharani Sunity Devi (1921), *Hindu Widow: An Autobiography* by Parvathi Athavale (1928), *India Calling* by Cornelia Sorabji (1934), *Smriti Chitre* (Memory Sketches) by Lakshmi Bai Tilak (1934–37).
  - 7 Teaching and medicine, the two professions legitimated for the nineteenth-century “new woman,” built upon and perpetuated the feminine stereotype of the nurturing mother whose femininity is oriented towards the socialization of her children and nurture of her family. However, as professions they necessitated an education and mobility hitherto unthinkable for women. Sathianadhan’s entry into medical college is described in her novel as being such a momentous event that the entire class stood up and cheered for her.
  - 8 A chapter from Ranade’s autobiography very finely illustrates this point.
  - 9 Mrs. Grigg wrote a memoir of Sathianadhan, which prefaced Sathianadhan’s novel *Kamala*. This memoir has been the most cited text on Sathianadhan’s life.
  - 10 Mrs. Grigg’s memoir is quoted in the appendix to the 1895 edition of the novel, as testimony to the reforming influence of Christianity and Western culture on Sathianadhan: “In her autobiography she has shown, sometimes it would almost seem unconsciously, what a higher culture and a purer faith can achieve in her country. She brings into strong contrast the ignorance and superstition of Kamala’s house and the equally simple but happy and enlightened atmosphere of her own home and surroundings” (Appendix 235). The Honourable Dr. Duncan’s opinion on the influence of education on Sathianadhan is summarized thus: “What Indian women really required were favourable circumstances in order to develop their latent powers. These circumstances were favourable with the late Mrs. Sathianadhan, and if they had been equally enjoyed by others, he [Dr. Duncan] was quite sure that many Indian women would be able to emulate the late Mrs. Sathianadhan in the great gifts she undoubtedly possessed” (Appendix 241).

Rai Bahadur P. Krishnamachari testifies to the ‘exemplary character of Mrs Krupabai Sathianadhan’ from his association with her as a fellow member of the Madras Branch of the National Indian Association thus: “She always seemed the very picture of modesty and she kept her capacity for literary work quite a secret” (Appendix 244).

Mr. N. Subramaniam, an acquaintance of Krupabai when she came to live in Madras, has this to say of her: “The higher education she had received,

which perhaps would have turned many an unbalanced head, had made her a homely, simple and unassuming lady without any conceit or pride. Her husband had often described her to him (Mr. Subramaniam) as his guiding star and had acknowledged that she had exercised considerable influence on him" (*Saguna* 1895, Appendix 243).

- 11 See Mani for a nuanced historical account of this nexus.
- 12 The decision to accept Christianity by Rev. W. T. Sathianadhan, the father of Krupabai's husband, who was strongly influenced by his evangelist teacher Mr. W. Cruickshanks, is narrated thus: "Under the instruction of this admirable teacher, the youth referred to remained for about three years, when light began gradually to dawn upon his mind and the Spirit of God convinced him not only of the folly of Heathenism, and the truth of Christianity, but also of his lost condition as sinner, and the necessity of closing in with the offers of salvation through Christ" (*Sketches* 32).

An excerpt from the autobiographical sketch of another convert, Guru Charan Bose, narrates the changes that take place in the to-be-Christian as follows: "The English education which I received in Hari's school opened the eyes of my understanding, and I perceived the folly of image worship. My faith in Hinduism was shaken; it failed to satisfy my spiritual cravings" (100).

Yarde's biographical sketch narrates Khisty's spiritual conflicts in his own words: "I began to be convinced that there could be only one God, and none other beside Him. Although my faith in idolatry was shaken, I still worshipped idols for fear of my friends. Through study and talks with the missionaries, by the great mercy of God I became convinced that the Christian Shastra was the true one. I prayed that God would give me strength to come through all the trials that must be faced. After a time I was enabled to give up idol worship" (190).

- 13 In her autobiography Tilak describes in harrowing detail her intense sufferings after the conversion of her husband Narayan Waman Tilak.
- 14 See Morris (116–118) on the construction of subjective consciousness in the Realist Novel.
- 15 See Forbes 161–67.
- 16 Referring to modernity's marginalization of religious belief to the realm of the private, Vishwanathan writes that this is "constitutively linked to the lack of an adequate vocabulary to deal with its worldliness." According to her, the destabilizing act of conversion restitutes the worldly function of belief. The act of conversion is not just an assent to a religious ideology but is also linked to struggles against worldly oppressions like sexism, racism and colonialism, hence, aligning it with cultural criticism. As significantly connected with the "politics of identity," Vishwanathan locates conversion at the "nexus of spiritual and material interests" (xxvi–xxviii).

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