

# A CLUB OF ICONOCLASTS

*Rough work, iconoclasm, but the only way to get at truth.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes

**P**oughkeepsie Rural Cemetery, established in the mid-late 1800s by well-to-do residents of Dutchess County, New York, is a beautiful burial site containing several hundred plots. Beyond a small welcome center at the entrance gate are gently rolling hills. The meandering roadway that cuts through them is gracefully framed by stately trees. It is a most tranquil setting.

Lot 216-A is much like the lots that surround it. It contains a dozen tombstones for members of the Eighmie (“Amy”) family: a monument for Jeremiah, the patriarch; his wives Mary Anne and Naomi; his two sons and his daughter Theodocia. There are also small tombstones for the four children that Theodocia lost before the age of five. Like most such cemetery plots, the close arrangement of the tombstones and their fixed nature seem to proclaim to the world the individuals’ commitment to each other for eternity.

One tombstone distinguishes this lot from those that surround it. That tombstone marks the location where the ashes of a young Indian woman named Dr. “Ananda-bai” Joshee are buried. It indicates that she lived from 1865 to 1887 and identifies her as the “first Brahmin woman” who came to America to become a doctor.

Who was this woman? Why were her ashes buried here? What was her connection to the Eighmie family? The tombstone offers just enough information to raise these questions. This book provides the answers and much more besides.



Her American friends and acquaintances called her Ananda-bai. They did not know that “bai” was just a suffix, an honorific like Mrs. or Madame, tacked on to add gravitas and a veneer of formality. They did not know that her name was Anandi (which means “joyful”), nor did they know that the name given to her at birth was Yamuna, after one of the great rivers of India. They were unaware that her first name had been changed, as was the custom, when she was married at the age of nine. Most importantly, her American friends could not have imagined the many ways in which her gender negated the privilege otherwise accorded by her high caste status.

Yamuna was born in March 1865 to a middle-aged Ganpat-rao Joshee (*rao* is the equivalent honorific for men) and his much younger wife Gungabai. They lived in a rambling house in the town of Kalyan, which was about thirty miles northeast of the city of Bombay (today’s Mumbai). In keeping with custom, the household consisted of Ganpat-rao’s wife and children, his parents, his brothers and their wives and children, as well as a constantly shifting entourage of cousins, guests, and other dependents.

The Joshees belonged to the Chitpawan Brahmin caste, one of the so-called “highest” castes in the stratified society of the time. They had lived in Kalyan for generations. The Maratha rulers in Poona had given land holdings and tax-collecting rights to an ancestor of Ganpat-rao as a reward for his loyalty and bravery in battle. Possessing abundant social and financial capital, the Joshees were the local elite.

The large Joshee house had a layout common for its time: a central courtyard was bordered on three sides by several rooms. Rooms on the upper floor were primarily used by the men. Rooms on the main floor were

not assigned to individuals; rather, they served a communal purpose. There was a kitchen, a storeroom, and a general purpose “middle” room used at mealtimes or as a sitting room. The “birthing room” was for women in labor and for new mothers. Set a little away from the main household, it offered privacy and quiet while also minimizing exposure to contagion.

The courtyard was a wonderful play space. The trees offered shade in the hot climate and were great for climbing. The swing was a favorite spot to catch a cool breeze in the evenings. There was also a *vrindavan*—a small square structure used in devotional rituals. A wash space in the corner was used for washing clothes, dishes, and hands and feet upon returning home.

Yamuna had a carefree childhood, with days spent playing with her many friends and cousins. Because of the presence of several adult women in the family, she had few household chores. However, Gunga-bai often got frustrated by her daughter’s rambunctiousness and sometimes beat her in the hope of subduing her exuberance. Unable to shield his daughter from his wife’s temper, Ganpat-rao made up for it by indulging little Yamuna whenever possible.

One fixture in the large Kalyan household, as in others of its kind, was the priest, or *bhatji*. Unlike in congregational religions, the duty of the priest was not so much to deliver sermons or explain the holy texts as it was to perform religious rituals (*pujas*) and offer prayer. The dedicated *puja* room in the house was his domain. At the center of the room was the altar that held idols of the various gods that the family worshiped. These ranged in size from a few inches to a foot or more and were cast in bronze, silver, or gold. There was a figurine of a baby Krishna, an idol of the elephant-headed god Ganesh, and a composite of Ram, Sita, and Hanuman. Prayers were chanted in Sanskrit. Lamps filled with clarified butter (*ghee*) were lit, and fragrant incense sticks were used to create a spiritual atmosphere. Freshly picked fruits placed as offerings to the gods (*naivedya*) were later consumed as a blessed gift from the gods (*prasad*).

Little Yamuna had never thought of the priest in a serious way and was

only four years old when she sat one day in the *puja* room playing with her dolls. She watched as the priest “bathed” the figurines, “dressed” them in clean clothes, and adorned them with freshly picked flowers. Suddenly, a thought flashed into her mind: there was no difference between the figurines and her dolls. They did not move, and they lay passive as the priest handled them. They did not cry like children when he rubbed them hard nor did they rejoice when he left them to themselves.

Later that day, Yamuna waited for her father to finish his lunch before seizing his hand and drawing him to the bench under a tree in the courtyard. “Baba,” she exclaimed, “how can a God bear to have his face washed by a man?” And then, not waiting for an answer from her astonished father, she described what she had seen and how the idols lay in the priest’s hands just like her dolls lay in hers.

“Those images are not Gods,” replied her father. “They are meant to hold the thoughts of the devotees while they pray. Some of them represent the love, and some the justice of God, and some only God’s creative power.” And then, being the indulgent father that he was, Ganpat-rao asked, “Can you pray to God without looking at the idols?”

“Yes, indeed!” she said.

“Then you need never think of them again,” he replied. “You don’t need them.”

This was a time when conservative Hinduism held sway and a Hindu’s life was governed by strict ideas of virtue (*punya*) and sin (*paap*), including how one should go about amassing the former and avoiding the latter. Religious virtue could be accrued by performing the many fasts and readings prescribed by the religion. It could also be earned by obeying caste strictures, which mandated complete separation from those of lower castes, and upholding standards of ritual and sexual purity. As Brahmins, the Joshees sat at the top of the religious hierarchy and so were the standard-bearers and interpreters of religious doctrine. And yet, Ganpat-rao was not just open to considering alternate, more rational, interpretations of the rituals of Hin-

duism, he was willing to share his views with his very young daughter.

Ganpat-rao possessed a genealogical record that dated back several generations. It was a scroll that contained descriptions of major events, such as victories in battle, in the lives of the family's illustrious ancestors, and drawings that depicted their stances and their attire. Such records were generally kept under lock and key. They were brought out only occasionally when it was time to make new entries or to show them to the young males in the family as they came of age. Yamuna did not know of the existence of this scroll.

When she was about five years old, Yamuna dreamed of a handsome young man who was dressed in a manner, and carried weapons, that she had never seen.

"Who are you?" she asked, like any frightened child might, when he fixed his eyes upon her.

"Do you not know who I am?" he asked gravely.

"No."

"Go then to your father," commanded the soldier, "and tell him to make you acquainted with my life; for it is you who are to tread in my footsteps."

At this she awoke, trembling and bathed in perspiration. She went to her father and earnestly begged him to tell her about the "god" whom she had seen. Ganpat-rao was unable to identify the figure from Yamuna's description. However, when Yamuna recited the figure's admonition—"It is ungrateful to be ignorant of him whose blood flows in your veins"—Ganpat-rao felt certain that it was one of his ancestors who had appeared to his daughter.

He reverently opened the family scroll and showed it to Yamuna. At last they came to a figure that she immediately recognized as the man from her dream. The picture was of the young general who had founded the fortunes of her family.

Ganpat-rao was even more tender toward his daughter after this incident. He came to believe that she possessed an exceptional mind and resolved to nurture her as well as he could. However, he could hardly have

imagined just how exceptional his daughter's life journey would eventually be or how important his early care of her would prove in that journey.



The men of the Chitpawan Brahmin caste traditionally served as priests in ritual-performing roles. It was also common for them to be farmers and, thanks to their literacy, teachers and accountants. Beginning in 1713, when Balaji Vishwanath Bhat was appointed *Peshwa*, the prime minister of the Maratha Empire, his fellow Chitpawan Brahmins found their way into all departments of government and began to acquire positions of power and privilege in the provinces.

One such was Yamuna's paternal ancestor who was a governor of the province of Kalyan and had been granted commensurate land and tax-collecting privileges. Chitpawans had come to be considered "a very frugal, pushing, active, intelligent, well-taught, astute, self-confident, and overbearing class"; they were described as following "almost all callings and generally with success."

However, the defeat of the Peshwas by the British East India Company in the 1820s fundamentally altered the prospects of the community. They lost patronage and, more importantly, they lost their access to and hold on power. When the Company later won a decisive victory over the Indians in the war of 1857, the Chitpawans, along with other Indian elites, became aware of their shared pan-Indian identity—an identity that transcended the fractured one defined by the intersection of caste, region, religion, and language. Their overarching condition—of being occupied and ruled by a foreign power—came into sharp focus. They started trying to understand and overcome the factors that rendered them weak vis-à-vis the British. This process gathered steam over the ensuing decades.

Back in London, the British government realized that if they hoped to retain control of India, many changes would be required. Knowing that the Indians resented the British East India Company, the government wrested

control of India from it. In addition, they laid railway lines, improved the law and order situation, and made communication affordable and reliable through the postal service. Their primary purpose was to better serve British trade and military interests. However, a secondary benefit was that these improvements made the Indians somewhat less inclined to resist British rule than they might otherwise have been.

As manpower was needed to run the new infrastructure, new job opportunities became available to Indians, and especially to those who knew English. So, the Indian elite started petitioning the British government to open schools and colleges for Western learning. They hoped that such an education would create a class of able workers while also developing men with modern ideas. And, these men would promote social and economic progress by countering crippling religious orthodoxy.

In response, the British government diverted some of its resources to establishing and operating high schools and colleges that taught English. The Chitpawans were among the first to send their sons to these institutions, and from there to jobs with the railways, the ports, and the postal service.



Ganpat-rao was one of those who embraced the importance of education. To that end, he established a small school in one of the upstairs rooms in his large home. The idea was to provide basic education to the boys in the family, in order to better prepare them to pursue higher education in the universities that the British had begun to establish.

An unlikely student in this home-based school for the boys of the family was little Yamuna. She had to be coerced to attend, however, and, surprisingly, the enforcer was not Ganpat-rao, but her mother, Gunga-bai. Living in a society that expected girls and women to be compliant and demure, Gunga-bai believed that it was her job to prepare Yamuna for the life that awaited her. Alarmed by Yamuna's tomboy tendencies, she often beat her daughter in the hope of subduing her. When this failed to have the desired

effect, she decided to send her to school. Gunga-bai hoped that the discipline and focus required in class would make her daughter more docile. At the same time, she hoped and prayed that the “sin” of educating a girl would not attach because she was not sending her daughter to school with the intention of educating her.

Yamuna missed the days of carefree play, especially since none of her friends were forced to attend school as she was. She stayed in class only because the alternative—being beaten by her mother—was considerably worse.

An extended-stay guest in this rambling household was a man named Gopal Joshee. When he came to live in Ganpat-rao Joshee’s household in 1870, he was a twenty-five-year-old widower. Originally from the small town of Sangamner, he had attended an English school in Nasik and possessed a high school education. He had a job with the postal service and had just been transferred to the post office in the nearby town of Thane. Much younger than Ganpat-rao, Gopal too was passionate about education and its importance for achieving social progress.

Even though Gopal shared the family’s surname, he was not related to them. However, he did belong to the same caste. This made it easy—even imperative—for Ganpat-rao to offer Gopal a place in his large household when Gopal moved to the region. The railway line that the British had built in 1854 proved convenient; Gopal could easily commute between the home in Kalyan and the post office in Thane.

Perhaps it was because Gopal’s interest in teaching had been thwarted by circumstances, or maybe it was because the teacher hired by Ganpat-rao was away, but somewhere along the way, Gopal started teaching in the little home school. Somewhere along the way, Yamuna became less averse to both sitting in class and learning to read and write.



By the time she turned nine, Ganpat-rao had become anxious about



the fact that Yamuna was unmarried. Even though the family was well-to-do, two things made finding a match for her difficult. One was that she had a darker than average complexion, a negative feature in a culture that valued fair skin. The second reason was that she had scars on her face as a result of a bout of smallpox.

And so, Ganpat-rao approached Gopal Joshee—his houseguest with a good postal service job who occasionally taught in the home school—with the proposal that he consider marrying little Yamuna.

There was no question of asking Yamuna's opinion—she was just nine years old. Additionally, the society did not consider females of any age as possessing judgment. Love between husband and wife, to the extent that it blossomed, was expected to stem from lives lived together. And a younger bride was preferred so she could more easily be molded to the ways of the family into which she would marry.

Similarly, there was little question of worrying about the almost twenty-year age difference between Gopal and Yamuna. After all, Ganpat-rao himself was considerably older than his wife. Many factors contributed to making marriages between older men and preteen girls commonplace. Custom dictated that girls were to be married well before puberty. The lack of medical care for women meant that many of them died very young. This resulted in an abundant “supply” of men wishing to be married. At the same time, widows were not permitted to remarry, further contributing to a high “demand” for young brides.

It is unlikely that an older widower like Gopal would have been the first choice of bridegroom for Yamuna. However, considering her “advancing” age and her less-than-desirable physical traits, Gopal seemed like a reasonable compromise to the worried Ganpat-rao. Indeed, in his view, Gopal had the distinct advantages of being educated and being employed by the postal service. In an undeveloped preindustrial society, his was a rare job that offered both stability and upward mobility. Having observed him over four years, Ganpat-rao knew that Gopal was a person of self-discipline and good

habits. His daughter would not want for anything.

Gopal proposed a condition before he would agree to Ganpat-rao's proposal. However, it was not a demand for gold and dowry, as was customary. Gopal intended to educate Yamuna, and he would brook no interference or objections. Ganpat-rao was likely surprised, and surely relieved, by the nature of Gopal's demand.

Having observed his daughter's intelligence and energy, Ganpat-rao knew that she would blossom under Gopal's tutelage. Of course, in a society that offered few opportunities to educated women, it was impossible to imagine what good additional education might do her. However, in keeping with the progressive thought of the time, he thought that furthering his daughter's education was preferable to the alternative. Furthermore, he lived in a society that considered a married daughter as no longer the responsibility of her parents. Thus, his only charge would be to stay completely out of the way. Ganpat-rao readily agreed to Gopal's condition.



Sangamner is situated about ninety miles from the cities of Bombay and Poona. Without a rail connection, being in Sangamner during the nineteenth century was akin to being isolated in the middle of nowhere.

Gopal Joshee was born in Sangamner in 1845. This Joshee family belonged to the Chitpawan Brahmin caste, just as did Yamuna's family. He was the second of five children. His older sister Mathu was only a year or two older than he was, and their father started including her in his lessons when he tutored Gopal at home. This was far from a simple or easy decision. The grip of ignorance and superstition was such that any deviation from tradition—in this case female education—carried the risk of being perceived as the root cause of any calamity that might befall the family. But the winds of change that originated in the cities of Bombay and Poona soon reached far-off Sangamner. Although aware of the social risks and religious superstitions, Gopal's father was in favor of imparting basic literacy

to his daughter.

Mathu was a bright student and often mastered the subjects more readily than her brother. Unhappy about this, Gopal once ripped all of Mathu's books and papers to shreds. What started as a childish sibling rivalry would have a profound effect—not directly on Mathu but on two other girls who would later cross Gopal's path.

Because of the custom of early marriage, Mathu was soon married and sent to live with her husband's family. This put an end to her relatively care-free life and her educational opportunities in the bosom of her birth family.

As a male, Gopal was exempt from both early marriage and separation from his parental home. But, he was subject to another custom—moving, at a slightly older age, to the nearest big town (in his case Nasik) in order to obtain an English education.

Males were commonly married in their teens. It was not necessary for them to be financially self-supporting at the time of the wedding, as family life was communal in nature. Thus, while a teenager, Gopal was married to a girl who was just six years old. Her given name was Mai, and it was changed to Savitri during the wedding (as Yamuna's would later be changed to Anandi). Even though it was customary to let brides stay in their parental home until they attained puberty, Savitri was sent to live with Gopal's family following the wedding.

As the youngest and newest person in the hierarchy, the little girl-bride was expected to help the older women in the family with household chores. Beginning with the simplest tasks, she would move on to ones of increasing complexity as she matured and learned from the older women in the family. This regimen allowed little room for play or for any other self-chosen pursuits. Separated from her family and all that was familiar, a young bride often became shy and timid.

As an observant and sensitive person, it troubled Gopal when he saw his young wife being roped in to work. Indeed, he had frequent vocal disagreements with his mother in this regard. It led him to think about his

sister's married life. Gopal was only about eight when Mathu was married and left for her marital home. Over the ensuing years, Gopal came to realize the futility of his early rivalry. He realized that she was very capable of learning and thinking, and even that she was better at it than he was. Yet, he also simultaneously realized that she had no power to exercise, or benefit from, those abilities. He did not want his wife to suffer that same fate.

Over time, Gopal came to believe that if brides were not sent to live with their in-laws, they would be spared both the trauma of separation from their birth families and the denial of their childhoods. He could see that being separated from their birth families inflicted pain in various forms—living among virtual strangers at a still tender age, feeling constrained to ask for anything (even perhaps food, when hungry), fearing the “authority figures” (all the members of the in-law household), and having to adapt while still so young to the various personalities and quirks of all of those in the new “family.” Worst of all, in Gopal's eyes, there were no opportunities for the young brides to learn anything besides family and household chores.

So it was that Gopal decided that he would educate his young wife, Savitri. Aware of the many hurdles he needed to overcome to achieve such a goal, he arranged for her to move back to the home of her parents. He also contacted Savitri's cousin, Gangadhar-punt (*punt* is another male honorific) Ketkar, who was both his friend and who shared his views about educating girls. Ketkar was a member of Savitri's extended household and was studying to become a lawyer. Ketkar readily agreed to teach Savitri at least enough to be able to write occasional letters. Gopal hoped to create a remarkable and irrefutable example by educating a female, thus establishing his claim that women were capable of learning and thinking.

Unfortunately, Savitri died only a few years later and Gopal's project came to an abrupt halt. Remarriage was an option, but he was not willing to marry another unformed girl, wrench her from the bosom of her family, and impose an education regimen on top of all the other duties with which she would be burdened.

His iconoclasm had evolved to encompass not just women's education but also the other challenges of women's lives. Recognizing that widows were uniformly vulnerable and ill-treated, Gopal made it known that he was willing to take a widow as his second wife. This noble goal was thwarted, but what occurred instead would change the lives of women in his country for generations to come.



The wedding of Gopal and Yamuna took place in the big house in Kalyan. In keeping with custom, Gopal exercised his right to change his bride's name. From this day forward, while she would remain Yamuna to her birth family, she would be "Anandi" to Gopal and his family. While customarily the bridegroom returned to his parents' home after the wedding and the bride continued to stay with her parents until she achieved puberty, theirs was not to be a traditional marriage. Gopal remained in the home of his father-in-law and in keeping with the condition agreed upon before the wedding, Anandi continued to attend the home school. In addition, Gopal continued to regularly tutor her after returning from work.

Although the men—Ganpat-rao and Gopal—had made a pact and understood each other when it came to Anandi's education, her mother and grandmother strongly disapproved of the plan. They worried that educating a girl would attract God's wrath. Also, although they were probably unaware of this, they resented the fact that Anandi could dodge the strictures with which they had had to comply as young brides themselves. So, they put an end to her days of both school and play and instead assigned chores and tasks intended to tire her and keep her from her studies.

From their perspective, the quality of Anandi's "achievements" as a housewife was a reflection on them as nurturers and teachers. So, as much as they worried about what kind of woman Anandi would grow into, they worried at least as much about their own standing within the community. It is sad and ironic that even though Anandi was still with her birth family,

she faced the exacting expectations that she would have encountered in the home of her in-laws. Gopal had not anticipated this outcome.

Laboring to form Anandi as they had been formed, to ensure she became an obedient and traditional wife, the women started urging Anandi to go to Gopal's room at night, even though she had not yet achieved puberty. Their ignorant teasing and indirect references to what might happen confused and frightened Anandi. While before the wedding she willingly, even eagerly, went to Gopal's room so that he could tutor her, after the wedding, she started to resist those visits.

Wanting to be understanding, Gopal did not force the issue. However, this led to yet another conflict with the older women. Anandi's grandmother admonished him—if Gopal did not show his young wife that he was in charge, Anandi would grow up to be defiant and unmanageable. These women had been so subjugated that they became the willing agents of another female's subjugation.

Anandi was caught between a rock and a hard place—wanting to be educated, but not wanting to go near her teacher. Gopal, too, was in a similarly impossible bind. He could be kind to his wife, but that would risk slowing her education, and he would be castigated for not being in control. One night, things came to a head. In the middle of tutoring, Anandi begged to be let out of the lesson and Gopal lost his temper. He beat her with a stick until she was black and blue.

After his temper cooled, it was clear to Gopal that their living arrangement was not conducive to executing the plan of educating his wife. He decided to request a job transfer to another town.

When he announced his plan, there was confusion in the household. Because Anandi had not yet achieved puberty, culture dictated that she should not accompany Gopal to live apart from family. However, Anandi was devastated at the thought of her education coming to an end. "I thought I should never learn anymore... and I would rather have died," she would later write to describe her predicament.

A compromise was devised. Anandi would go with Gopal, but so would Aji, her grandmother. Aji would help her run the household and teach her the things that she had not yet learned. Gopal was happy with this arrangement; he hoped that having Aji would free Anandi to focus on her studies and be spared from performing some household chores.



Gopal was transferred to the small seaside town of Alibaug, and the trio stayed there for a little over two years. During this time, Anandi's education progressed in a mostly unimpeded manner. Gopal tried the "carrot and stick" approach, using whatever it took to move closer to his goal. He humored Anandi and rewarded her by buying her shoes, an indulgence unheard of for women of the time. As an additional carrot the two of them went out for strolls on the beach—a welcome respite from days spent within the confines of home. Though both these actions went against the custom of that time, and invited scorn from their neighbors, Gopal and Anandi were undeterred.

Gopal's sticks were more beatings as well as threats of abandonment. Although Anandi was not a stranger to the former, the latter was a new and debilitating threat. An abandoned wife would have no choice but to return to her parents' home disgraced, bringing shame and compromising their standing in their community. As a result, Anandi reluctantly labored to complete the homework assigned by her husband.

As Anandi matured, so did her interest in dressing up. She tried different looks by mixing and matching pieces from her collection of nose rings, toe rings, bangles, necklaces, and ear ornaments made of pure gold. As was the custom, they had been given to her as part of her wedding endowment. She experimented with different-sized red dots on her forehead and wore her sari in a style that was crisper than the norm. She enjoyed getting together with other girl-women in the neighborhood to chit-chat and play games. Gopal refused to allow such distractions. He criticized Anandi's innocent

fascination with color and shine as a sign of a mind that was too focused on appearances. He railed at her girlish pastimes as immature, shallow, and useless.

Aji was of no help. She continued to challenge Gopal for his beliefs and expectations and Anandi for neglecting her duties as a homemaker. The unusual threesome muddled along unhappily. Anandi attained puberty at the age of twelve and became pregnant soon after.

In keeping with custom, Gopal brought Anandi to her parents' home in Kalyan a few weeks before her expected delivery date. A reluctant, scared, and frustrated student-wife, she looked forward to being away from her husband and to being doted on by the women of her family. Having children was an important milestone in a woman's life as it cemented her position within her husband's family. There were many celebrations and parties. But the flip side of this expectation, though not often mentioned, was that if a woman was unable to have children, her husband might eventually send her back to the home of her parents, or might seek and marry a second wife. All in all, Anandi was filled with anticipation about the birth of her baby.

When a boy was born, it was occasion for great joy. Then, as even now in many traditional communities, male children were prized. But sadly, Anandi's joy was short-lived, as the baby died after only ten days.

She was devastated by the loss. Most women in this unfortunate situation found solace in the beliefs of *karma* (that this was meant to be) and *paap* (punishment for sin in a previous life), and they became more devout. This offered both solace and a way to accrue *punya* (virtue) to ward off future calamities. They also drew support from their sisters and mothers, who were not unfamiliar with such an experience. A subsequent pregnancy, which often followed fairly quickly, helped erase the memory of loss.

However, only a few years of schooling had altered Anandi's thinking. She was convinced that her baby lost his life because of a lack of medical care. She also saw that her misfortune was just another page in the larger narrative of women's lives, in the havoc brought because the notion of



modesty dictated that male doctors (all of the few available doctors were men) could not treat women.

This unfortunate brush with a common scourge of her time opened a window to a new perspective for Anandi. “What if I were to become a doctor?” she wondered to herself. And this one simple question fired her imagination. It also enabled her to channel her grief over the loss of her baby into something meaningful and constructive—something for which she had exactly the means. Anandi returned to Alibaug with new energy and new resolve. Her education would no longer be just her husband’s project.