Indians march through Durban in 1959 to protest the lack of schools and educational resources.

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The Muslim belief is that the Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation in the Cave of Hira in the Mountain of Light (Jabale-Noor), a few miles outside Makkah, when he was around forty years old. There the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) instructed him, 'Read!' When the Prophet replied, 'I cannot read', he was commanded twice more to read before he spoke the very first words of the Qur'an: 'Read in the name of your Lord, the Creator…Read in the name of your Exalted Lord. He brought to humans what was transmitted using a pen. He taught humans what they did not know.'[1] In emphasising the importance of education, several members of the Women's Cultural Group referred to this verse and to the fact that the Qur'an contains many verses calling on human beings to exercise intellectual curiosity, which, in the past, resulted in Muslims developing a strong tradition of mathematics and natural science. The Prophet also emphasised the importance of knowledge on many occasions. Several informants reminded us that one oft-quoted hadith calls on Muslims to 'Seek knowledge, even as far as China'.

Opportunities for education were limited in the 1950s and the Group's members, according to Mayat, were concerned that 'the education level of girls was very low. Our endeavour was to raise the level of education among the disadvantaged, especially women.' This was due, in part, to the failure of the state to provide adequate facilities and, in part, to the attitudes of Indian

parents. In Durban, during the preceding decades, reluctance to educate Muslim girls had been linked to imperatives of women's seclusion but, in the emerging climate of progressivism, there was a competing worry that long-term economic community advancement of both the individual and the collective required educated women.

Arguments in favour of girls' education, like the one advanced in *Indian Opinion* by Zohra Moosa's aunt Zulekha Omar Jhaveri in 1938, linked women's opportunities to more general concerns about the 'destiny of our race', suggesting that these concerns grew in tandem with a sense of (Indian/Muslim) community. Jhaveri must have been fifteen or sixteen years old when she wrote – under the heading 'Muslim Culture' – that men need not fear that the education of Muslim women would break through the bounds of purdah but, rather, that Islam and women's intellectual liberation were quite compatible:

> Education is not as you imagine a definite prelude to moral decadence. Indeed not. It is something finer in quality than the purest gold. In short, education is anything that elevates the moral, physical, social, intellectual and spiritual development of a people, and though there is today the ludicrous belief that the woman who observes 'Purdah' is, unlike her more fortunate and liberated western sister, deprived of the opportunities of intellectual development, Islam at all times has examples to the contrary… Just as dormant volcanoes become active as a result of the forceful powers from within, so our minds too are becoming active and are waking up from their lethargy.[2]

Yet, well into the 1950s, prevailing attitudes and lack of resources and facilities continued to be among the reasons for repressing this seismic intellectual awakening. Women were quick to take what was offered, however, and informal instruction and training opportunities in women's organisations were fully utilised. Mayat frequently voiced her praises for her peers' intellectual achievements when writing in 'Fahmida's World', unable to resist comparing the performances of men and women. For example, about the Arabic Study Circle's annual speech contest held in 1956, she observed:

> The standard this year has been very high in both the delivery and the subject matter, which is an indication that the participants have benefited

> greatly from the tafsir classes and by discussions held by the Indian Women's Cultural Group at their monthly meetings. All the winners in the English section were members of the cultural group and also the winner of the first prize in the Urdu section. I cannot help but contrast this with the men's contest held a month ago. The men suffer so much by comparison that I just cannot view the two in the same light. Not one of the men can hold a candle to any of the women. The latter spoke with authority, confidence and charm…Well done girls. Fahmida is proud of you all and takes off her downie to you as a mark of respect.[3]

Mayat emphasised that this was the 'Indian' Women's Cultural Group so as not to exclude non-Muslim Indians even though she was reporting on a Muslim event. Members of the Group expressed a uniform passion for education, often citing the religious dictate of lifelong learning – 'from cradle to grave'. Many of the Group's first-generation members, such as Zuleikha Mayat, Gori Patel and Khatija Vawda, who grew into adulthood in the 1930s and 1940s, had experienced the frustration of thwarted educational ambitions. In their case, this was largely because of social pressures among Muslims against girls attending school beyond a certain age. What emerges in the narratives of other members of the Group is that education was possible where there was the strong support of a male family member – a father, husband, grandfather or other, who deployed his benevolent, patriarchal authority to overrule complaints about gender propriety and who promoted the education and scholarly development of a daughter, wife or granddaughter.

Certainly during the period from the 1940s to the 1960s, for most women, one could echo Metcalf's sentiments on India that ultimately men 'remained the actors: it was they who granted women education; they who were called upon to be generous to women'.[4] In some cases, wealth created openings for families to create their own rules – often associated with exposure to travel and the confidence to weather reputations of eccentricity by virtue of community power and general worldliness. The family of AI Kajee was one of these and Zubeida Barmania, as his granddaughter, was its beneficiary. The stories of Gori Patel, Mariam Jeewa and Zubeida Barmania demonstrate with special clarity how the presence or absence of a supportive male could result in widely divergent fates for a girl's prospects.

Gori, Mariam and Zubeida

Hawa Bibi 'Gori' Patel was born on 10 October 1922 in Durban, where her father, Ahmed, owned a retail store in Field Street called Fiji Outfitters. She had three sisters and a brother. Gori attended St Anthony's School in 'Victoria Street next to the ematsheni'. Although the school was run by the Roman Catholic Church, her father 'wanted to give me education – "You must go to school, you must become a doctor" – and I was interested in all that too, I used to take newspapers, read…'

There were separate classes for boys and girls. Gori was the only Muslim girl at the school. Her male contemporaries included future community leaders like Ebrahim Moosa and Ebrahim Haffejee, as well as Zuleikha Mayat's future husband, Mahomed. Gori's three elder sisters did not attend school. They were educated by an 'Indian lady staying next to our Derby Street house – she was a teacher so she used to come and teach my sisters, you know, a, b, c, and that' [*laughs*]. And the girls also learned from their mother, Aisha, whom Patel describes as 'very modern, not like an old woman, you know, and she educated us. She give us Urdu, Gujarati, Arabic and that time, they did Moulood…so they teach me too Moulood.' In 1934, just as Gori finished Standard 4, her father died and the 'trustees and the family, they took me out [of school] and even [the staff] from St Anthony's School they came to ask, "You must see her, she's very intelligent, uncle; why you want to tell her to leave the school?" But [my uncles] said, "No, our Muslim girls don't go to school".' So she 'learnt to cook and play with the neighbours and all the girls and went to madrassah' until her marriage.

The story of Mariam Jeewa is similar to Gori's in some ways but the outcome was different. Mariam was the daughter of Ebrahim Jeewa, who was the proprietor of *Indian Views*. Ebrahim was born in Surat, where he was educated to Standard 4 before emigrating to Natal. He was a keen reader and opened the Union Printing Press and a bookshop in Victoria Street, the first in Natal to stock Islamic books. Mariam described her father as 'religious-minded but liberal-minded too. He believed in girls' education – he didn't believe that now the girl is becoming mature, she must be kept indoors and be taught cooking and get them married.' Mariam was born in 1929 and attended the Madrassah Anjuman Islam in Pine Street. She completed Standard 2, studying English, Arabic, Urdu and 'very little Gujarati', when her father decided to take

Nehru (standing centre left) visits the cosmopolitan University of Calcutta, where Mariam Jeewa graduated with a medical degree. (Mariam is in a white sari on the right.)

her to India. Jeewa was keen to educate his daughters but faced community opprobrium if he sent them to high school in Durban. Mariam, her parents, elder brothers Mehmood and Moosa, and sister Fatima went to India in 1939 just as the Second World War broke out. Mariam recalls that in

> those days it was against our tradition – Gujarati (Muslim) girls mustn't go out for further education. Moosa Meer defied that rule and he sent his daughter Fatima for education. She studied in Durban, and I think Johannesburg, and see what she is today – a famous person and I'm very proud of her.

Ebrahim Jeewa rented a house in Aligarh, where his children enrolled separately at the boys' and girls' high schools. While their English was good, 'we were poor in maths and things like that but with the help of tutors we caught up.' An additional problem was that Urdu was the medium of instruction. 'We had grown up speaking English and Gujarati. When we used to communicate with the other schoolchildren, they used to laugh at our pronunciation. In the beginning we were very embarrassed.' After matriculating, Mariam completed a BSc at Aligarh Muslim University College, while her brothers, Memood and

Moosa, studied medicine at Bombay University and her sister, Fatima, qualified as a teacher at Aligarh. Mariam was given a place at Calcutta Medical School after completing her BSc degree.

> When my father informed my nana and my uncle here in South Africa that 'she's got admission and I'm sending her to Calcutta', they were very much against the idea: 'You sending your daughter to Calcutta, Calcutta is the second-largest city in British Empire so you must consider your daughter lost.' But my father followed his gut feeling and instinct and he told me – he used to read the letters to me that, 'Look, your uncle has written this, your nana has written this – that I mustn't send you, what do you say?' I said, 'No, I want to go for further studies.' So he said, 'Okay, Bheti, you go. The only thing is that Calcutta is a very big city – you'll be staying in a boarding house there [as] there are not many people you know.' We knew Mr Vaid. He was from Gujarat and they had a very good business in Calcutta. So he was my local guardian there. I coped. It was a nice life there, free life, I must say, but we knew where to draw the line. Before going, my father said, 'Look, everybody's against the idea of me sending you to Calcutta but I want it and you want it, but you must remember that' – in Gujarati he used to say – 'the respect of my beard is in your hand, so it's up to you how you behave', and that stuck in my mind all along.

Mariam began her medical training in 1951 and completed it in 1958, despite her father dying of a heart attack when she was in her second year. She returned to South Africa and did her internship at McCord Hospital, qualifying as a doctor in 1960. She married Dr Ismail Sader of Ladysmith and practised medicine for the next four decades.

Mariam Jeewa's educational path crossed with that of a future Women's Cultural Group member, Zubeida Barmania. In 1943, when she was just eleven, Barmania's grandfather AI Kajee sent her to Aligarh High, where she initially stayed with Mariam Jeewa's family. After almost four years she had to return to Durban following the death of her grandfather. She matriculated from the Durban Indian Girls' High School and had her mind set on studying law. She enrolled at the Non-European Section of Natal University and did a few pre-law courses (black students were excluded from studying law), before going to London in 1959 to continue her studies and where her contemporaries included

Zubeida Barmania (front row, third from right) singing Christmas carols with fellow university students in Beirut, 1967.

Fatima Meer's brother Siddique Meer. She returned to South Africa and served articles with Ismail Mohammed, who was later appointed Chief Justice in post-apartheid South Africa.

She found Durban very confining. 'It didn't matter what I had done, getting any kind of position, you know, even as a junior lawyer or whatever, I think the attitude was, "Ah, she comes from a rich family, she doesn't need to work, she'll be married, have six kids" – that sort of thing.' In 1966, Zubeida was on holiday in the Middle East and fell in love with Beirut, and returned there to do a master's degree at the American University. She remembers meeting the Canadian Consul in Beirut. 'I said to him that I was looking for a country where I could practise and I could be myself. You know, in a way it was self-exile though I didn't consciously call it that at the time.' She subsequently moved to Canada, where she completed another LLB at the University of Western Ontario and got a position with Ontario Hydro. She returned to South Africa in 1994. Barmania describes her life as 'a mosaic of different cultures, countries, education and rich influences. It has been quite wild, beautiful and deeply fulfilling, even if not always.'

Although the lives of Zubeida Barmania and Mariam Jeewa intersected at certain points, their Durban family backgrounds were different and the trajectory of their lives reflected this. Both grew up in an atmosphere of books and

reading, but Jeewa's father faced massive family opposition to sending his daughter to school. Barmania's grandfather, AI Kajee, faced no censure from those around him. He was probably the best-known Indian in South Africa in the 1940s, wealthy, cosmopolitan in his personal and political associations, with an acute mind and a reputation for reading a book a night. His granddaughter embodied that free spirit in every way. Recalling their days at Aligarh, Mariam described Zubeida as 'a very outgoing person [*laughs*] – she used to sing and dance and we all used to enjoy ourselves'.

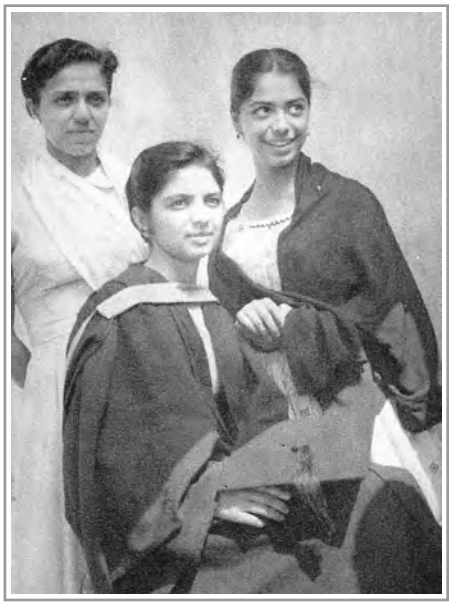
Path-breaking into the professions

Women such as Mariam and Zubeida were exceptions in being able to study abroad. A few Muslim girls remained in Durban and braved community censure in pursuit of higher education: Zulekha Jhaveri was one; another was Amina Butler, Fatima Meer was a third and Fatima Mayet was a fourth. All attended the Durban Girls' Secondary in Dartnell Crescent. The school for Indian girls was opened in 1930 and had sixty-four students by the end of the decade.

Zulekha Jhaveri matriculated there in 1941, and her schoolmates recall that she arrived in school in a rickshaw that was covered with a purdah in order not to flout decorum. Amina Butler was the first Muslim woman to qualify as a teacher in 1951 and her burning passion to educate Indian girls is remembered by many.

Fatima Meer, born in 1929, was the daughter of Moosa Meer, who was the editor and, later, proprietor of *Indian Views*. Her extended family was heavily involved in politics and she herself addressed a mass rally at Red Square as a teenager during the passive resistance campaign of 1946.[5] Fatima attended the University of the Witwatersrand for a year and then the University of Natal, where she completed her BA and later joined the Department of Sociology.

Fatima Meer's classmate from Standard 4 until she matriculated, and also a contemporary of Amina Butler's, Fatima Mayet qualified as a medical doctor. Fatima and her sister Khatija[6] grew up in Newcastle, where she attended St Oswald's School until Standard 4, and then transferred to Durban, where she matriculated from Durban Indian Girls' High School. Khatija, the elder sister, left school at the end of Standard 8 because of pressure from her extended family. Fatima continued with the support of her 'parents [who] were very enlightened – when they realised that I was serious about my studies, they



Left: Fatima Meer delivered her first political speech during a passive resistance campaign rally, 1946. Right: Fatima Mayet graduating (attended by sisters Khatija and Hawa).

support[ed] me despite the fact that the greater family in Newcastle was very much against it. They didn't think that girls should be educated.'

Fatima Mayet applied to do medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1947 but legislation gave preference to white soldiers returning from the Second World War. She completed a BA degree at the University of the Witwatersrand with the intention of later entering its medical school. However, a medical school was opened in Durban in 1951 and the authorities refused her application to remain in the Transvaal.[7] Fatima then enrolled at Natal Medical School, as one of just fifteen students in 1952. She qualified in 1957. In 1958, a jalsa held by the Mehfile Khwateen Islam became an occasion to celebrate Dr Fatima Mayet as the first Muslim woman to qualify as a medical doctor in Durban. Fatima Meer spoke at the event, about changing views on the matter of educating girls, and Zuleikha Mayat, reporting on the speeches in her newspaper column, noted Meer's pointed observation:

> when Dr Mayet proceeded to university, people who now come to pay homage to her had at that time criticised her parents for this revolu-

> tionary step. Dr Mayet, in her reply, mentioned that 'people are in the habit of confusing religion with man-made customs and I thought that was putting the situation in a nutshell'.[8]

The state of education for Indian girls

In his 1954 study of the economic position of Indians in Natal, CA Woods described the 'very great break with tradition' in relation to girls' education as 'remarkable' but

> even so, many parents limit schooling for girls and expect it to end when puberty is reached…The ultimate influence of a girls' school with its class work and its dramatic societies will no doubt have far-reaching effects on Indian women. At present however, there are still the twin barriers of parental opposition and lack of accommodation with the result that the number of boys who attend school is still much larger than the number of girls.[9]

MG Pillay, Durban Inspector of Schools, reflecting in 1967 on why Indian parents had in the past been reluctant to send their daughters to school, said that they feared that 'the girls might not pursue learning but might learn pursuing'.[10] Zuleikha Mayat was critical of parents not educating girls and argued in 1958 that their education should be prioritised. 'Boys as well as girls are moulded and influenced more by mothers than by the best and cleverest of fathers and, if the future generations are to amount to anything, then it is imperative to see to it that our daughters are given a better if not the same education as our boys.'[11] Writing as a teenager from Potchefstroom in 1944, aspiring to an advanced education of her own, Zuleikha had linked girls' education to material advancement for the family:

> The rich man may be able to afford bringing up his daughter without an education (of course, no person can for the sake of his children afford this) but can the poor man do so without feeling the stings of his own folly? Consider the material gains, if a man educates his daughter and has her skilled in such a humanitarian profession as nursing or if she takes up commerce, domestic science or dressmaking courses, whereas the unwise decision of parents compels the girl to stay at home, and,

The opening of the Fannin Government-Aided School in Wyebank. Indians had to pay for half the cost of school building.

> instead of helping to alleviate the task of earning money, which falls solely on the shoulders of the male members of the family, she passes her time in envying her richer neighbours.[12]

Community attitudes were one set of factors that prevented some girls from obtaining a formal education, but poverty and the shortage of schools were equally important impediments. For the first few decades after the arrival of indentured Indians, neither the government nor employers made any provision for education. The first schools, established by Christian missionaries from around 1880, were handicapped by insufficient funds and facilities, poor attendance, language difficulties and a dearth of capable teachers.[13] The 1909 Natal Education Commission noted that the government was seriously lagging behind in providing schools for Indians whose 'contributions to the revenue entitle them as our fellow subjects to elementary education at least'. In 1926, only 9 913 of an estimated 32 000 Indian children (30.9 per cent) were in school.[14]

Education was given a great boost by the 'upliftment clause' in the Cape Town Agreement of 1927 signed by the governments of India and South Africa, which specified that Indians should not 'lag behind other sections of the

population'.[15] The number of pupils rose from 8 250 in 1925 to 35 397 in 1946.[16] However, the increase was mainly in so-called aided schools – a scheme whereby Indians had to buy land, build a school and pay for its upkeep while the government reimbursed 50 per cent of the building cost. In 1949, 84 per cent of Indian schools in Natal were 'aided'.[17] In contrast, 83 per cent of white schools were government-run in 1945.[18]

There are many examples of the Indian community's involvement in enhancing educational facilities. When working-class parents from the Magazine Barracks complained in 1941 that there was no place for three hundred children, AI Kajee offered to provide two-thirds of the cost of a school from the Hajee Moosa Charitable Trust on condition that the Durban City Council made land available.[19] The same Trust built the Fannin Government-Aided School in Wyebank in 1941 on land donated by the MA Motala Trust. AI Kajee stated at the opening ceremony that merchants did not see education as 'merely a sort of learning; its greatest task was to abolish poverty'. ME Lakhi of Greytown donated desks and Ismail Jooma provided cupboards for the school, which was for working-class children of all religious persuasions.[20] Sastri College, the first high school for Indians in South Africa, was opened on 14 October 1929 with funds from Indian merchants and made no distinction in pupil intake on religious grounds.

In a social climate in which segregated schooling was taken for granted, the educational needs of 'Indian children' were tallied as a discrete statistic. Official reports describe the state of education of Indian children as 'inadequate'. The Broome Report of 1943 stated that 'what has been achieved in Indian education cannot yet be considered adequate or satisfactory', while the Corbett Commission of 1944 stated that 'the Natal system for Indian children falls far short of adequacy'.[21] In 1936, for example, 15 594 of 21 000 boys (74 per cent) and 5 762 of 19 000 girls (30 per cent) of school-going age were attending school.[22] Most children dropped out in primary school. In 1939, for example, for every hundred children in Standard 1, fewer than two matriculated.[23] By 1941, 27 449 of 50 900 children were in school.[24] However, as we note from the 1936 statistics cited above, more boys than girls attended school. In 1942, the Director of Education in Natal reported that 'the demand for accommodation is still far in excess of the supply and hundreds of Indian children have to be turned away each year because the existing schools are full'.[25] In 1951, the Natal Indian

Teachers' Society called for a collection of £150 000 to build schools. Teachers themselves agreed to pay a levy of 6 per cent of their monthly salaries and by October 1954 had raised £11 000.[26]

The education that was provided was neither compulsory nor free. Indian pupils had to buy books and materials while these were provided free to their white counterparts. Another feature was the platoon system whereby schools were used twice each day for different pupils. As late as 1971, thirteen thousand primary school pupils were taught in 'double sessions'.[27] Zuleikha Mayat captured the trials that parents faced in their pursuit of education for their children when she wrote in 1956:

> The long queues of parents and children outside all Indian schools during the first few weeks of each term has become a common sight. Some of these parents have been trying unsuccessfully for years to get their children admitted. Said an elderly gentleman: 'Let me initiate you in this struggle with which I am conversant by now. First you fight and say angry words that something should be done about this intolerable situation. After several days of wandering around the schools with your child you eventually get him admitted to some school, that is if you are one of the lucky ones. After a respite of several years comes the time he has to go to high school. Then you start following the headmasters or those with some influence like a puppy, begging them to consider your child.'[28]

In 1959 the Education Department decided that one way to overcome the shortage of Indian schools was to raise the entrance age from five to six. Many Indians were unaware of this and Mayat reported:

> Some parents booked schools well in advance. But this was to no avail. They were told that they could not admit children under six years. The children who had already been mentally prepared for school going were too small to understand this hitch and looked as pathetic a picture as the parents who begged and cajoled and threatened the harassed school authorities. Yes, everyone seemed aware of the fact that European school children were admitted at the age of five, but surely that is nothing new. An early start is assured them and maintained for ever afterwards as this is *their* South Africa.[29]

By the end of the 1950s there seemed to be little respite. Fahmida sarcastically condemned the authorities whose attitude seemed to be: 'What are you people complaining of? Each year you have more and more schools going up… compare your position with that of your compatriots in other countries.' According to Mayat, Indians were seen to be 'bordering on High Treason if [they] dare to compare [their] situation with that of whites.'[30]

Still, there was a dramatic increase in the numbers of Indian children attending school. In 1952, there were 57 060 students, of which 22 669 (almost 40 per cent) were girls. Most pupils were clustered in the primary levels: only 771 students were in Standard 8 and 302 in Standard 10.[31] By 1959, the number of younger schoolchildren was estimated at 100 000, including 42 000 girls. There were 16 high schools in the province.[32] MacMillan wrote in 1961 that 'few Indian parents deliberately keep children away from school, but there are those who do not keep the children at school long enough for the youngster to benefit adequately, due, frequently, to poverty and reasons arising from this.'[33] As more girls began entering schools, 'Fahmida' of *Indian Views* urged mothers to get involved in their children's education, admonishing:

> Have you wondered why these school committees are known as Parents' committees, when it is more appropriate to call them Fathers' committees, especially in our Indian schools. These men have proved themselves most inadequate for the responsibility given them…Night and day it is drummed into us that a woman's job is to look after her children. Does looking after them imply just food and clothes?[34]

Among Indians of Muslim faith, children had historically received formal education from a very young age at madrassahs that were attached to mosques. For example, the Anjuman Islam School, attached to Durban's West Street Mosque, was opened in 1909 with an enrolment of one hundred and fifty, including fourteen girls, in response to a decision of the government not to allow Indian children over the age of fourteen into government schools.[35] Similarly, a madrassah attached to the May Street Mosque had an attendance of seventy-nine in 1920.[36] In addition to the tenets of Islam, madrassahs taught the Gujarati, Urdu and Arabic languages.[37] It was only when merchant leaders like AI Kajee and AM Moolla came to the fore that Muslims attempted to combine religious and secular education. The South Coast Madrassah State-Aided School (1947),

Sayedah Ansari's first day at Crescent School in Pine Street. She is dressed in black, seated in front of her father, Mawlana Bashir Siddique.

Ahmedia State-Aided Indian School (1947), Anjuman Islam State-Aided School (1953) and Orient Islamic High School (1959) were built for this purpose. The language of instruction was English.

The establishment of Orient Islamic High in Centenary Road, Durban, resulted in women becoming formally involved in school governance and decision-making. In February 1958, a Woman's Committee was formed to collect funds for the school's hall. AM Moolla's offer to Zuleikha Mayat and the Women's Cultural Group was announced in *Indian Views* as follows: 'For each thousand pounds collected the women will be entitled to elect a member of the board of trustees who in turn will be eligible to stand for elections on the General Committee of the School.'[38]

According to Mayat, Moolla did not need their assistance but saw this as an opportunity for the members of the Group 'to prove that they were serious and responsible' about participating in public life. Moolla, chairman of the Orient Trust, put the proposal in writing on 16 January 1958 to 'Mrs Mahomed Mayat':

> In efforts like this the community needs the help and co-operation of our better educated Muslim ladies in the interests of the education of

> our children. In this I am quite sure you could take a most helpful and fruitful part, in association with Mrs [Bibi] Mall, Mrs [Hajra] Seedat and a few others. What I would like to see is an active Muslim Ladies Committee under your initiative and guidance. You three ladies would be making a most valuable contribution to the progress of the school if…you could make the school's needs known among the women of our community. I am also taking the liberty of asking you to do this for another reason. The School is not only to be the best and largest Muslim school ever attempted, it is to accommodate girls as well as boys and I have long felt that Muslim ladies of your attainment should be invited to take an active part in the governing body of the school…I know that you have many duties to perform but it is only to such as you that I can appeal in this worthy cause. The school needs our Muslim ladies. Its full success, in fact, cannot be assured without their help and interest.

A group of women met at Hajra Seedat's to discuss Moolla's proposal and thereafter a committee of six women met with him to get an assurance that there would be no opposition 'from the community' to their presence on the governing body. With verbal assurance secured, twenty-four women launched the fund on 21 February 1958 at the Mayats' Mansfield Road home. A vigorous collection drive was led by Zuleikha Mayat, Khatija Vawda, Bibi Mall, Fatima Loonat, Hajra Seedat (mother of Group member Zubeida Seedat), Amina Meer (wife of MI Meer of *Indian Views* and mother of Fatima Meer) and others. They had raised £2 800 by 12 December 1958, when Moolla told them to stop as he would grant them three representatives.

Despite the assurances that there would be no barriers to women's involvement, opposition from certain male quarters did indeed lead to a delay in the women joining the board. The Women's Committee, which consisted mainly of members of the Women's Cultural Group, wrote to Moolla on 6 June 1959, 'lest there be a misunderstanding, we would like to recap the fact of our basis of association with you'. They reiterated the terms of the agreement and asked for finalisation:

> Realising that you are being kept busy with various affairs of the Indian peoples here, yet we cannot let this matter ride along as we too are committed to our ladies committee as well as to members of the public

Farewell for Miss Pauline Morell (holding flowers), principal of 'Girls' High', who was dedicated to the education of Indian girls in Durban.

> who responded so generously to the fund and to whom we had specifically mentioned the basis of our understanding with you.

Moolla granted them the seats but persistent opposition made some of the women reluctant to be represented on the board. Moolla set Mayat's mind at ease when he wrote on 7 November 1960 that

> there is really no need to slow down in your duties and responsibilities to serve the educational cause of our community. The writer assures you that the number of people in the Institute who have some dislike for this approach of making it possible for ladies in our community to serve in welfare work is very small and you and your colleagues should not become sensitive to its existence.

Zuleikha Mayat, Amina Meer and Khatija Vawda became the three representatives, and this has opened up avenues for the involvement of the Women's Cultural Group in the school ever since. 'Whenever Dr Moolla needed something, he would approach me, and I would get the Group involved,' Mayat explained, 'and if we needed something from the community, I could phone Dr Moolla. There were always open lines.' Mayat is adamant that Moolla 'never used us as a rubber stamp. We were outspoken and our views were respected.'

Fatima Loonat replaced Amina Meer as trustee in February 1974 and Hajira Omar replaced Fatima Loonat in 2004.

Secondary education

Mabel Palmer noted in 1957 that Durban Girls' Secondary in Dartnell Crescent was 'at first badly attended owing to the prejudice of Indian parents against educating their daughters, but this has now been overcome to some extent.'[39] In fact, as shown earlier, by the end of the 1950s the demand for education could not be met. Mayat observed in 1959 that 'there are two new high schools in Durban and yet the story was the same, "Sorry, no more, we are full". Girls, boys and parents went from school to school begging that they be given preference, this education meant everything to them…they could see no future…but the same old story'.[40] 'Fahmida' pointed out that racial integration of schools was the clear solution for overcoming the shortage. Her impatience with prejudice in the following passage also indicated the extent to which schooling was bringing Indians from different backgrounds together:

> The obvious answer is to integrate the schools. I can see that the greatest objectors to this state of affairs will not be the whites but us Indians. Heavens! Already we find it difficult to reconcile the situation – that is, to sit in the classrooms with different Indian groups – so how gallish the idea of sharing schools with a chow-chow mess of Africans, Indians, Boers, Jews and perhaps even one or two whose ancestors were aboriginals.[41]

Increasing opportunities for education are reflected in the experience of second-generation members of the Women's Cultural Group who, during the later 1950s through the 1960s, were allowed to go as far as Standard 8, sometimes even to matriculate and, in a few instances, go to university. Fatima Mayat and Laila Ally were among those who completed high school.

Fatima Mayat was born in Camperdown and grew up in Victoria Street and later Cato Manor. The family shop 'AM Mayat Wholesalers' was in Field Street, just around the corner from their home. She spoke 'a lot of Gujarati because I had my dadi and my nani all living with us so, you know, we weren't allowed to speak English and we lived in a communal family – all five brothers with their wives and about twelve children in one house.' She has fond memories of this extended family:

> The atmosphere in Ramadan was fantastic because at that time there were no freezers and, as a child, I remember so clearly that every day samoosas were made, including the purh, and we had such a big table – dining table – that we used to all sit together and eat. We also used to study together. We had a room where we had typewriters – no computers at that time – but each cousin used to help the other one with homework and we had a driver who used to pick us up in the morning and take us to school.

Mayat attended St Anthony's School in the 1950s, by which time there were a 'good number' of Muslim girls. In the afternoon the children in the family attended a madrassah in Umgeni Road run by Mawlana Bashir, father of Group member, Sayedah Ansari. Her friends included future Group member Laila Ally. At school they spoke English with friends and teachers. The family also read the *Natal Mercury*, *Daily News* and *Indian Views*. Mayat was a keen student who enjoyed school very much, but her schooling came to an abrupt end in Standard 8 when

> my granny just won't hear of it, no schooling – Standard 8 and that's it. I was very, very upset but then it was home schooling, you know, you do things at home – cooking, domestic work, sewing, embroidery, all sorts of things. Initially I was upset but we had no say in the matter. My future father-in-law was quite liberal and my sister-in-law Fatima went to university and to Howard College. They allowed her because there was a lot of pressure from my father-in-law [even though] my grandmother wasn't happy at all. We had ladies coming home to teach us how to sew, how to do handwork – we weren't deprived of all that, but no, no to school. Most of my other cousins were the same as well.

Laila Ally was the daughter of AK Rajab and grew up in the landmark Rajab residence in Clare Estate with no less than forty members in the household. Her grandfather Rosendeen Rajab had a great love for Persian poetry and was an ardent admirer of the cultural and artistic achievements of the Mughal Empire. His homes and businesses reflected the artistic and cultural achievements of the Mughals. His first cinema, the two-thousand-seater Shah Jehan in Grey Street, was named after the fifth Mughal emperor, while other cinemas were named Isfahan (after the former capital of Persia) and Shiraz (a city in Persia). His Moorish-styled home overlooking the Umgeni River was named

Laila Ally's extended family made their home here. The Rajab household was featured in South African Panorama *magazine in August 1968 and described thus: 'High on the knoll of a hill overlooking the Umgeni River valley just outside Durban, stands a great house of Spanish-Moorish design, marble white against the green jade of the subtropical Natal vegetation. The 32-roomed mansion is home of one of South Africa's most remarkable Indian families, and also houses the nucleus of one of the most comprehensive and valuable family collections of Oriental art in the world.'*

'Salaamat' and housed one of the finest private collections of Oriental art in South Africa, including Ming vases, tapestries and Persian carpets. Ally grew up in a home where, according to one description 'we are brought forward to the splendours of the East in no uncertain manner'.[42] The Rajab family also opened the first Indian-owned interior design company in the country . Ally attended St Anthony's school and subsequently Durban Indian Girls' High School where she matriculated in the early 1960s. While her family was considered 'liberal in many respects', with their cinema ownership and trendsetting interior-design business, there were limits as far as her education was concerned. University education, for example, was out of the question:

> Considering I come from that kind of a family background, my father, my parents were very orthodox, they wanted women to progress, but to a certain level, you know, maybe being very good housewives but as far as education was concerned, matric was as far as the girls, I mean all my cousins, could go, but the boys continued their education. Even as far as the driver's licence was concerned, my father said, 'The day you get your marriage licence you get your diver's licence'. That was the kind of process I suppose at that time but, you know, because we were, I suppose, brainwashed into thinking that 'Okay, fine, you're not going to go any further', we really didn't mind.

The experience of Fatima Patel shows both the newfound opportunities for girls as well as the limits to what they could achieve. She lived in an area known as Isipingo Rail, where her father, Moosa Jadwat, ran a retail store. After completing Standard 6 at the local primary school, she proceeded to the only high school in Durban.

> Before they never used to educate the girls, you know, Standard 6 was just enough, but my father says, no, he wants to send us to high school. So we used to travel by train every morning to Durban Girls' High. There were six girls – two Hindu girls and four Muslim girls – we used to travel by train but we had our own compartment in the train just for us. My father made arrangements with [the Railway Department] so we used to travel by train and then get down in Berea Road and take a walk right up to Girls' High…We all used to travel in the train together… [But] when I was in Standard 9 I got proposed and they wanted the wedding so I had to leave school and get married [1962]. I didn't finish my matric and I was very upset about it…Then my husband and them had a shop in Cathedral Road so I used to help him with his books and things like that.

Sisters Ayesha Vorajee and Mana Rajah had difficulty completing high school following the death of their father, Suleman M Paruk, in 1956. Paruk had himself been forced to leave school in Standard 8 following the death of his father. He was well connected in local politics as a member of the Natal Indian Congress, where he worked with prominent Muslim leaders like AM Moolla, AB Moosa and AI Kajee. He also had a taste for the finer things in life. Photographs show

him impeccably dressed in the latest suiting with a pocket handkerchief, while all the family crockery was imported from England. He also taught the children, Mana Rajah recalls, 'how to set the table with the knives and forks and all that'. While unable to complete his education, Paruk subscribed to *Time* and *Life* magazines and the daily newspapers and was generally well informed. Rajah emphasised that

> we weren't allowed to read any trash and he also introduced us to the library. In the apartheid days we weren't allowed to go to theatre but he just somehow managed to take us and sometimes they used to have non-white days so he used to make sure he took us to theatre. He also used to take us to the movies.

For Ayesha Vorajee, their father 'felt that you empower women with education… He introduced us to, you know, a [different] type of culture. And, ya, it is sad because it is not encouraged in very many Muslim homes.' There was resistance from the extended family. Mana Rajah related her maternal grandmother's resistance to the girls learning English:

> She used to come to my house after my father died, she used to come and live for up to six months. My sister [Ayesha] and my cousin who used to come with my granny weren't allowed to read English books. Oh, she was so fussy about that – so they used to hide their books under the mattress and when she was sleeping they would read all their novels and whatever they wanted to read. It was very exciting because if you weren't allowed to do something, it was more exciting to do, you see. She [grandmother] says girls mustn't be educated, they must just learn how to sew and, you know, do kitchen work and cook and then get married and have children – that was their way of thinking.

The school's uniform did not help their cause, according to Mana:

> I was going to Dartnell Crescent, Durban Girls' High, and we weren't wearing pants. We used to wear the school uniform with our blazers and ties and short dresses but they were on our knee, I mean they were very respectable dresses. The dresses were white with navy blue and gold striped tie and navy blazers and we had a principal by the name of Mrs Dory, a wonderful person…Even our teachers too – in those days we had

> white teachers – very, very dedicated teachers. And we learnt Afrikaans and Latin, you know, I don't know why I learnt Latin but we had to do it. You see, this aunt – sometimes my mother would tell me that my granny's not well so she'll be in Pine Street [and] from school we must take a walk and go to Pine Street and she'll meet us there. So this aunt used to see us and she would say, 'Hey, you people are…' – she used the most derogative terms because we weren't wearing Islamic dress [long pants]. In Woodford Grove [in Stamford Hill] my mother allowed us to read books and, you know, we used to go to the movies and everything. It was fine. But my granny's house, you can't talk about going to a movie.

Ayesha and Mana would experience somewhat different educational fates, as we discuss below.

Tertiary education

Tertiary education was also racially segregated and marked by gender division. The Springfield Teachers' Training College was opened in 1951. The opening of the ML Sultan Technical College in 1956 to provide commercial and technical education was initiated by a grant of £17 500 towards a college building by ML Sultan, who had arrived in Natal as an indentured worker and made his fortune through banana farming.

University education meanwhile had been available through the University of Natal's separate Non-European Section that offered courses in the faculties of arts, social science, commerce, and education since 1938. They hoped to train mainly teachers and social workers, and classes were held in the afternoons at Sastri College after the high school students left. In 1953, there were 161 students registered, including fifteen women.[43] Zuleikha Mayat described the university in 1959 as 'a university from which every vestige of campus activity was divorced from the non-European section (Yes, that is the university our children go to – Natal University Non-European Section) and the story was the same. These courses made available for you and for a limited number only.'[44] The Extension of University Education Act of 1959 later established completely separate 'tribal colleges' for black university students, who could no longer freely attend white universities. An 'Indian' university was opened at Salisbury Island in 1963 and transferred to Westville in 1971.

A few Muslim women took advantage of opportunities for higher education but, as Nafisa Jeewa points out, this was an exception: 'Even with high school there weren't very many Muslim girls at that time. I was at [Durban Indian] Girls' High and most of them were non-Muslim girls. But there were just like a sprinkling of Muslim girls.' Jeewa attended Salisbury Island in the early 1960s:

> We couldn't get into Howard College [at the University of Natal] – and then there was this tribal university and we had Afrikaans lecturers that spoke either Dutch Nederlands or Afrikaans – I think they did that deliberately because most of the students that were there were just out of school, and a lot of the boys didn't do Afrikaans at school until later – in Standard 9 or 10.

Nafisa studied Afrikaans and, after completing Nederlands 1, the Department of Education offered her a position at Ahmedia School, which she accepted. There were 'a handful of Muslim girls – a Ms Meeran from Pietermaritzburg and a few from Johannesburg'.

Zubeida Seedat grew up in Greyville, and schooled at St Anthony's and Durban Indian Girls' High. There were a few Muslim girls but 'by Standard 8 they started tapering off – they didn't go on much longer. At a certain age they were supposed to come home and get married.' Tehmina Rustomjee was her best friend. They spoke both English and Gujarati but English dominated in their homes. As late as the 1950s, they had several white teachers, such as Miss Dorey the principal, and Miss Hammond. Amina Butler was their teacher as well. After matriculating, Seedat attended the Non-European University at Sastri College in Warwick Avenue. She completed a BA degree and wanted to do her LLB but the university did not admit black students to its law programme. Instead she did an honours degree in native administration and an MA in anthropology, with a dissertation on the Zanzibari community in Chatsworth. By the time she completed her MA, LLBs were being offered to black students and she qualified as a lawyer in the late 1960s. Her contemporaries included Thumba Pillay, VS Rajah, and Paul Davids, who were involved in the anti-apartheid struggle through various movements. At university she recalls that 'some [lecturers] were difficult but there was absolutely no interaction as such, you know, you went for your lectures, you came back – there was no real campus

life because it was segregated, so that part you just missed. You didn't have this student existence at all.' She subsequently lectured white students in the Law Faculty at Natal University for a few years in the 1970s and found the experience 'very schizophrenic' given the relationship between the white and black communities off campus. She joined the firm of Thumba Pillay, Hassim Seedat and Ebrahim Goga but, being 'too much of an individualist', opened her own practice a few years later.

Despite intense opposition from his family, Sara Simjee's father, Ahmed 'Chota' Parak, encouraged her to matriculate:

> I don't know where he got his zeal for education. I always wondered that myself, because in his family, there were no people who were educated. But somehow with schoolbooks too, he made sure we all had new books, you know in those days we paid for our books. He used to take us to the bookshop and sit with us and cover our books, he had a lot of interest. He always did say, 'Get a good education.' And when I got married and enrolled in UNISA [University of South Africa], he was so thrilled; he said, 'You are actually carrying on'.

After matriculating in 1966, Simjee spent a year studying for a BA degree at Salisbury Island. She passed but left when she got married at the end of the year to Ahmed Simjee, now a professor of medicine at the University of Natal. She enrolled at the University of South Africa aiming to complete her degree by correspondence but was unable to complete her studies because of the birth of the children. Her daughter, however, entered tertiary education and completed a BCom degree, on her urging.

Zubeida Patel (née Bobat) was born in Pietermaritzburg and grew up in Malvern in Johannesburg, where her father had a business. He died when she was seven and her family moved back to Pietermaritzburg to live with their extended family. She attended high school which

> wasn't normal. I lived in my grandmother's home in an extended family and the home was very close to the high school and so I just walked to the school pretty much unnoticed by my uncles who were very traditional. They didn't send their daughters to high school so I was one of the first women in the family to have had a high school education and the opportunity to go to university.

Patel attended the Salisbury Island campus from 1966 to 1969, completing a diploma in teaching. She married Ismail Patel during her second year of study and was expecting their first child at the time of her graduation. The stories of Sara Simjee and Zubeida Patel are interesting in revealing the societal expectation that women should marry young, even while pursuing higher education. After the birth of her two eldest children, Fawzia and Rashad, Patel returned to the University of Durban-Westville and completed a degree in French and English, and subsequently a master's degree in education.

Sisters, Ayesha Vorajee and Mana Rajah, tragically lost their father when they were fourteen and ten respectively. Although their father had encouraged them to pursue their education, they faced intense opposition from the extended family upon his death. In Ayesha's case, 'straight away the uncles, the paternal uncles and the maternal uncles, stopped [my schooling]. "Right, no going to school, you understand?", and yet my dad always wanted to educate us. He always told my mother that whatever happens "I would love my daughters to be educated".' Mana was younger and she, with her mother's support, resisted family pressure. After matriculating, she attended the ML Sultan Technikon, where she completed a course in dress designing. Shortly thereafter she met

> two white girls from South Africa who had studied in London, one had become a designer and the other studied commerce. We just happened to meet one day at some function and started talking and decided to open a business together. We opened a little boutique called 'Top Gear' in West Street near these beautiful shops called John Orrs and Payne Brothers [who] used to have the most beautiful silks from France. The fabrics were unreal and we used to make up garments for the July handicap and the *Sunday Tribune* would take photographs. These girls were very beautiful and used to model as well. But also it was difficult because I couldn't use the same lift to go upstairs as them so they stopped using the whites-only lift, they used to use the lift with me. When we used to go to David Strachan & Taylor, our auditors, we used the goods lift – the three of us – because I wasn't allowed to use those [main] lifts. We carried on for quite a few years until I got married.

Mana then became involved in her husband's family's business.

According to the 1970 census, 864 Indians (145 women and 719 men) had a bachelor's degree in the greater Durban metropolitan area. A further 1 868 (524 of them women) had a diploma. Only 1 823 women and 4 855 men had matriculated out of a total Indian population of 321 204, which was made up of roughly equal numbers of men and women. The economically active population of 93 355 included 18 312 (19.16 per cent) women, mostly in lower-paying jobs. Among administrative workers, there were 46 women and 899 men; and among sales workers, 917 women and 8 766 men.

The flow of Indians into tertiary institutions became much more pronounced during the 1970s. The control of Indian education shifted to the Department of Indian Affairs in 1966 and free and compulsory education became available from 1970. Between April 1967 and March 1972, twenty-six new high schools and sixty-nine new primary schools were planned for Natal.[45] The rapid increase in the building of schools resulted in adequate space for all children by 1973, when Director of Education PW Prinsloo announced that all Indian children of school-going age would be accommodated.[46] This reflected in the numbers of children attending school. For example, the number of candidates who wrote the final year Natal Senior Certificate examination increased as follows: 336 in 1953; 530 in 1960; 1 167 in 1964;[47] 2 623 in 1968; and 10 449 in 1984.[48]

Education ushered in important changes. One was the increasing importance of English. In her study of language use among Indians, Dr Devamonie Bughwan found in 1972 that 62 per cent of Indian children used English when speaking among themselves and 52 per cent spoke only English with their parents.[49] The number of Indians who regarded English as their home language increased from 6 per cent in 1951 to 93 per cent in 1996. Reflecting on the impact of education in 1967 in the state propaganda magazine about South African Indian life, *Fiat Lux*, Durban Inspector of Schools, MG Pillay, pointed out that girls were marrying later and many were entering the job market, with occupations like receptionist, typist, sales assistant and hairdresser being very popular, in order to raise the family standard of living, and arranged marriages were declining. He argued that education had 'freed South Africa's Indian women', and that the Indian community had realised that 'our women are capable of handling more than dishes and diapers'.[50] While small numbers of Muslim women were beginning to attend university in the 1960s, it was really from the mid-1970s that it became common for girls to matriculate and for some of

them to attend the University of Durban-Westville, Springfield Training College, and the ML Sultan Technikon.

Many early members of the Women's Cultural Group, themselves denied opportunities for formal learning, were strong advocates of education as a means to empower women and they were determined that their daughters would avail themselves of the opportunities that were available. Ayesha Vorajee always held that education was 'very important, and I feel that when you educate someone you are empowering the whole family, you know, to get out of whatever problems they have.' When Vorajee, an artist who paints in oils, sold her first painting she 'took that money and gave it to Mrs Mayat to be given out as a bursary, because I was so thrilled that I managed to sell one of my paintings, and because I feel, really, that educating a person is very important. And even now too, I am still painting, and whatever I sell, I give it towards educating to empower someone.' Both her sons graduated with degrees in commerce.

Shairbanu Lockhat recalls that her mother, dying from cancer, 'always maintained to me, "Please give your children education. Make sure they get a good education because education is going to see them through."' Lockhat lost her father in a car accident at the age of eight and this also meant the loss of a supportive patron for her continuing education. Indeed, in the absence of her father, the family was reconstituted and it meant that any aspirations she harboured were not easily realised. She had been diligent in her studies, with a talent for biology in particular; some training in first aid at St Anthony's School awakened in her a desire to become a nurse. But, 'when I told my [maternal] grandfather and grandmother, they shrieked, "No ways! You are not going to be a nurse!"' This puzzled her because her mother's sister Amina Vaid had been permitted to study medicine and qualified as a medical doctor. When Lockhat, much later in life, inquired about this discrepancy, her grandfather hinted that the decision had been her paternal grandmother's. Lockhat, reflecting on possible explanations, considered:

> I suppose she felt that I had lost my father and maybe there was nobody to oversee what I was doing. I don't blame my grandmother. Maybe if her son was alive she would have said yes. Because my aunt, my mother's sister [who became a doctor], did have both sets of parents, so they knew what they were doing. Maybe my grandmother felt that I was alone and

> my mother couldn't do that much; maybe if my father were alive, he could [have] helped me.

This was one reason why, when raising her own children, she worked hard to ensure their education. She emphasised the importance of a qualification to her children: 'I made sure that their schoolwork came first, didn't pressurise them, but made them sit and made them understand that today you need to be educated.' Her eldest daughter Fatima qualified as an optometrist and her second daughter Mariam did a degree in social work.

> I made the children see [the value of education]. I said, 'You must get a degree.' I insisted and that's how they did it, and they made me proud when each of them qualified and graduated. I'm happy that the children are now well settled. They have something to fall back on. If I'm not around at least they can say, 'Well, we've got something there', and I hope that whatever I have taught them they are carrying out with their children.

This narrative is common to many members. Fatima Mayat was forced to leave school after Standard 8 but her daughter Aziza did an honours degree in psychology. Aziza, according to her mother, also 'had a passion for the kitchen' and 'qualified as a chef' and is now a professional caterer living in Sydney, Australia. Laila Ally 'pushed my children. I wanted my daughter to do something more than I did so that's why I encouraged Raeesa a lot and she's an attorney.' Khatija Vawda's daughter Rehana qualified as a teacher, specialised in children with hearing problems, and received a scholarship to qualify as an audiologist at Northwestern University in the United States. Zohra Moosa's daughter Khatija completed a BA degree and is a teacher. Unable to fulfil their own desires for a formal education, most first- and second-generation members of the Women's Cultural Group ensured that their children had the opportunity to do so.

One of the more remarkable stories of this period is that of founding Group member Khatija Vawda. After losing her husband Dr Goolam Vawda (one of the first Indian ENT specialists in Durban) in 1977, she withdrew from public life for a while. Encouraged by her family, she enrolled at the University of Durban-Westville and graduated with a BA degree in 1981. She remembers the lighter moments of university life:

Khatija Vawda

These [young varsity] girls used to ask me at spare time when we used to get together, 'So why do you, Khatija, why don't you come to the cafeteria?' I kept on saying no, no, no, and then one day they wanted to know my reason. I said, 'Okay, you want my reason? I am an elderly person compared to you girls. I know what goes on in cafeterias. The young generation may know me but I don't know them, I know their mothers, I know their parents. So I don't mind going there, but the young generation may know who I am, and it may embarrass them, so I'd rather not go. That is my reason.' They said, 'Oh gosh! We wish our parents would think like that.' [*laughs*]

Bursaries and loans

In March 1956, 'Fahmida's World' reported that a Miss Hansoo Bibi Khan of Merebank had gained admission to the Medical School in Durban and had received a bursary from the Amod and Amina Moolla Bursary fund.[51] In her column on 16 May 1956, Mayat mentioned a Training Centre for Muslim Teachers and appealed to the public to take advantage of the scheme: 'An appeal will be made to the public for funds for the scheme and for bursaries for the teachers. It is earnestly hoped that Muslim lady teachers will also volunteer for the course.' She also passed a gentle hint to bodies like the Mehfile Khwateen Islam and the Women's Cultural Group to 'arrange bursaries for female teachers if possible'.

The need for financial assistance was dire among many Indian and African parents who were mired in poverty and keen to send their children to school. At the suggestion of Mary Grice, the Group began assisting African students by providing funds to a bursary scheme run by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR). Association with the Institute led to a police search in the early 1960s. Mayat recalls:

Sergeant Moodley comes to our secretary who was staying in Wills Road. And Mrs Coovadia, the secretary's mother, quickly phoned me, 'The

> police are here, they are talking to Khairoonisa, and they want to see the books. And she said she hasn't got [them], but you've got them.' She had them but was too afraid. I was staying in Clare Road. So Sergeant Moodley, within half an hour…he was there at my door and said, 'You know, I was there at your secretary's home and she said she hasn't got the books.' I said, 'No, she has got the books but she was just frightened of you, and we don't know why you're coming here.' And he said, 'Well, we want to see who you're giving your money to.' 'Fine, here is the cheque book. You can look at it, from there you can pick up.' 'So this is SAIRR?' [he asked.] I said, 'Yes, they have got a bursary scheme for African children and so we give it to them.'

While bursaries have been handed out since the inception of the Women's Cultural Group, full records of these are available from the 1970s, showing the growth of the amounts disbursed. From 1954 to the mid-1960s the focus was on high school students. In 1956 the Women's Cultural Group raised money for three bursaries which were given to pupils attending Clairwood Girls' School to see them through their Junior Certification. 'Fahmida' hoped 'that the recipients prove worthy, since it is not everybody that can be so lucky'. These were among the first bursaries provided with funds raised by the Group and there was a commitment to raise funds for more promising pupils from impoverished circumstances. She called on the public to apply to their secretary Fatima Osman [Loonat] noting that 'the applicants need not necessarily be girls or students in high schools'.[52]

As more Indian students began attending university, the emphasis shifted to tertiary education. Amounts disbursed for bursaries increased from R2 000 in 1972 to R600 000 in 2009.[53] To put these figures into perspective, in 1979 the annual fees to study for a BA at the University of Durban-Westville were R270 per annum. In 2009, the annual fees for same course were over R20 000, excluding inflationary growth in the costs of transport, books, food and lodging.

Initially, the main sources of the Group's income were from cooking demonstrations, fundraising events and returns on investments. From 1984, however, *Indian Delights* began to be published under the auspices of the Group's Educational Trust, which allocated R102 000 to bursaries and R100 000 to its development fund in that year. The development fund was earmarked for establishing a women's activity centre for the community, but when the Group

scaled down that vision and acquired its current premises, the money was ploughed back into the bursary fund. *Indian Delights* has been a crucial source of revenue. As Zuleikha Mayat noted at the AGM in July 2007, 'had it not been for *Indian Delights* our financial position would have been akin to that of the many other organisations that rely on public funds…The *Indian Delights* baby has spawned and nurtured all of these [many projects]'. As the bursary capital grew, considerably higher sums of money were given from the 1990s, with around R600 000 disbursed in 2009. In 1993, the Group launched its 'One Million Rand Bursary Fund' campaign to meet the needs of students in view of the higher cost of education:

> The Education Trust is now going to put all the funds at its disposal into a Bursary Capital Fund. We hope that this will top the million rand mark by the end of next year. The coming years will see many of our students stretching out their hands for University fees. So instead of accumulating the dividends, we will help students pay for their education.[54]

Aside from the sales of *Indian Delights*, fundraising and prudent investments, bursary income has been obtained from donations, the institution of memorial bursaries, and trusts such as the Hafiza Mayat Trust, Kathor Lillah Trust, Shifa Charitable Trust, and YGH & Partners, which periodically provide bursary funds to the Group to disburse.

Funding to students was initially given in the form of non-refundable bursaries. This changed to loans in the mid-1970s, when a student, upon qualifying, donated back the money she had received in order to benefit another recipient. Changing to a loan scheme has not, of course, meant a total recovery of bursary money as the loans are interest free. A student who receives assistance for three to four years will usually pay that loan back over four or five years after qualifying, and there is a loss to the Education Trust through devaluation and inflation. Unrecovered loans also mean the continual loss of funds. To counteract such losses, one idea advanced was that loan repayment should be at the rate of the academic fees at the time of repayment. However, this was shelved because it was seen to be in conflict with the Islamic prohibition against repayments exceeding the amount loaned. Another suggestion was that candidates should be encouraged to make a 'voluntary donation' after the loan had been repaid. But this, too, did not become policy

when some members felt that it may be seen to constitute a form of interest through coercion. A Group memorandum issued in 2004 stated their philosophical resolution that 'since our aim is to improve the quality of life among the disadvantaged, we view the loss as a solid investment in society'.[55] And, as Ayesha Vorajee pointed out, there are always a few students who repay more than the amount received, as a sign of gratitude.

Tardy rates of repayment were costly to the Group and Zuleikha Mayat regularly expressed frustration at the attitudes of recipients who would refuse to pay back loans despite the best efforts of Fatima Loonat, who handled bursary repayments until she took ill in the late 1990s. In her monthly newsletter for March 1992, Mayat wrote:

> Some students who owe us R12 000 pay back as little as R100 per month which means that they will take ten years to pay off their loan. That is if they pay regularly and many pay irregularly. We have observed some of our graduates instead of paying us back go for *Umrah* and other trips which shows they have the ability to pay bigger instalments if they have the correct priorities.

The treasurer's report noted in June 1996 that bursary repayment had been 'poor' and that the Group was reluctantly forced to hand overdue accounts to credit control. During financial year 1997/98, the treasurer reported that a significantly higher amount was repaid due to the policy being 'more strictly adhered to'. The treasurer's report of July 1998 stated that

> regular reminders are sent to students who have graduated and those that do not respond are handed over to credit control. We regret having to do so but I believe that one can be soft and forgiving with one's own money but Trusteeship is an *amaanat* and so a great responsibility rests on Trustees in their management of Trust Funds.

Notwithstanding these measures the Trust was forced to write off bad debts each year. For example, R76 862 was written off in 1999, which had accrued over a long period, and a further R49 581 was written off in 2000. According to Zarina Moolla, who assisted Fatima Loonat when the latter took ill and later oversaw the bursary repayments portfolio, they had no option: 'We have an undertaking form that [recipients] sign which means absolutely nothing if you

can't get them to agree to pay. We had credit companies, we had a lawyer but there was no success really.' There has been a gradual turnaround over the past decade. In 1999, Mayat specifically thanked Zarina Moolla and Aziza Mayat for 'being persistent in their efforts. It needs tenacity and firmness to deal with people with *bad memories*.' In June 2001, Mayat commented that 'there has been exceptionally good performance by the Bursary Team, especially in recouping repayments from students who are gainfully employed'. Two years later, Zarina Moolla was again praised for her vigilance: 'old recipients are being tracked down and many conscientious ones have begun payments'. Some defaultees went back twenty years but they were 'able to pursue debt collections with a fine comb'.[56]

Zarina Moolla wrote in the Group's jubilee brochure in 2004 that the Education Trust 'emphasise[s] greatly self-reliance, responsibility and empowerment. We therefore have adopted a robust campaign to ensure that our students repay their debt to us as soon as possible. This has helped substantially to increase the amount of funds available to us.' As Zarina Moolla explained, the accounts have been 'captured properly on computer and are running quite well'. Where the approach to record keeping had once been more casual, full details about recipients (address, identity number, etc.) are now rigorously kept up to date. From 2001, the Trust began charging an administrative fee to cover the cost of telephone calls and faxes for the recovery of outstanding debts. The recovery of R4 040 during that financial year almost covered the year's telephone and fax bill of R4 874. The Trust continues to face problems though, as Zarina Moolla explains:

> Sometimes, you know, it's just unfortunate that the students don't complete their studies, they don't find jobs, they want to pay but they can't pay. Others sometimes totally deny having received the bursaries and can be very rude about it. The thing that has helped us a lot is updating the books. If the books are up to date and you know what's going on, no matter how much people argue with you, you can prove your point. And that's been the success. The recovery rate is very good now and between Safoura and myself we keep tabs on them all the time.

Despite the hitches, the Group has learnt expensive lessons over the years and accurate and effective record keeping has been fundamental to improving

repayment rates. Younger members such as Zarina Moolla have also brought in new skills and professional experience, reflecting the educational privileges of a new generation that earlier Group members can be credited with working so hard to achieve. In addition, new communication technologies, such as faxes and cell phones, accountancy and bookkeeping software, and the now ubiquitous driver's licence and vehicle ownership have enabled the Trust to carry out a closer scrutiny of bursary loan recipients' academic performance, improve follow-up and dissemination of information to the bursars, and provide clear and accurate accounts and specialised payment plans.

While the Education Trust raises the bulk of its monies through fundraising and book sales, it sometimes receives donations from individuals, organisations and businesses. For example, when the Group celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2004, Mayat wrote to Al Baraka Bank on 30 April of that year, noting that 'customarily when celebrating a birthday or wedding anniversary one is loaded with goodwill and gifts. For our 50th anniversary we hope Al Baraka will in appreciation of our service to the community donate another magnificent sum to us. That would wipe out some of the wrinkles on our ageing faces.' The bank responded with a contribution to the bursary fund. Others have done likewise over the years.

Two other sources of funding are zakaat and donations made in commemoration of family members or associates, which is known as Esaale Sawaab and refers to the dedication of the reward (sawaab) of charitable deeds to living or deceased persons. This practice stems from the Muslim belief in a hadith of the Prophet which states that, when a person dies, all but three of his/her acts come to an end: sadaqah jariyyah, beneficial knowledge, and a pious child who prays for the deceased. Over the years, a number of bursaries have been started in honour of deceased persons. A recent example is the Noor Jehan Scholarship, which was established around 2007, when Dr Adam Mohamed gave a donation in the name of his late wife.[57] In most instances, donors set criteria for bursaries or loans, such as that the Group must take into account the financial circumstances and academic results of applicants, as well as obtain a written commitment that the recipient will do community service and/or become involved in humanitarian causes.

In other instances, the Group has dedicated bursaries to individuals who have contributed to community work or assisted the Group over many years.

Zarina Moolla explained that sometimes members wish to

> make a contribution for somebody who has done a favour for you [but] who is not taking money, like Solly Manjra for instance. He does a lot of work for us, you know, and we wanted to thank him so we put funds in his name, which will earn income and, when income is given out, there will be sawaab in perpetuity for him. We've got our own members as well and, when we've had a good year, we put some money for them as Esaale Sawaab.

The Group receives zakaat funds annually without actively seeking to collect such funds and handles this according to the criteria.[58] The fact that the public entrusts the Group with zakaat funds is indicative of its reputation for reliability and trustworthiness. Mayat, in fact, commented at the AGM in July 2008 that the increase in zakaat funding should be taken as a compliment that 'the public, in recognition of our work, entrusts us with their zakaah and lillah, feeling confident that it will be put to good use for worthy causes'. Speedy utilisation of zakaah and full accountability has earned the 'admiration' of donors.

While this funding is a boon for the Group, Mayat feared compromising the Group's independence. 'Not having to solicit funds may afford us more time to expend our energies on other projects, but [it] will lead to us losing the right to declare that we generate our own funds for our own projects.' This fierce independence has been a feature of the Group's narrative from the time of its formation.

The funding sources of the Educational Trust indicate that, whatever the intention of the founding members and trustees, the Women's Cultural Group has been perceived as a mainly Muslim organisation catering primarily for Muslim students. Zubeida Patel, who was the secretary for a few years in the 1970s, recalls the Group received many

> letters from black students asking for bursaries. We gave out a few per year. And I remember feeling very sad about the fact that we were turning away black students who had a difficult time going through school with their mothers working as domestics and not having much money and they had to pay for school and uniforms and that was a very difficult time for me.

Nafisa Jeewa, secretary from the late 1970s through to the mid-1980s, agrees that there was a great need among Africans but emphasises that the Group was not intentionally biased in favour of Indians or Muslims. 'Most of the bursaries were given to whoever approached us – Indian children, black children – they were given the bursaries as well but we weren't in contact with certain people.' Jeewa's explanation is that since the Group was better known among Muslims there have been more applications from Muslims. However, it is worth noting that of nineteen bursaries handed out in 1976, for example, eight beneficiaries were African, nine were Muslim Indians and two were non-Muslim Indians. In 1983, fourteen of the thirty-one recipients of assistance were non-Muslim students, several of whom were Africans.[59]

Officially, the policy has always been that 'our beneficiaries are allocated irrespective of ethnicity, gender or creed.'[60] In her speech at the 18th AGM in 1972, Zuleikha Mayat explained the procedure for selecting applicants and conceded that there was some bias:

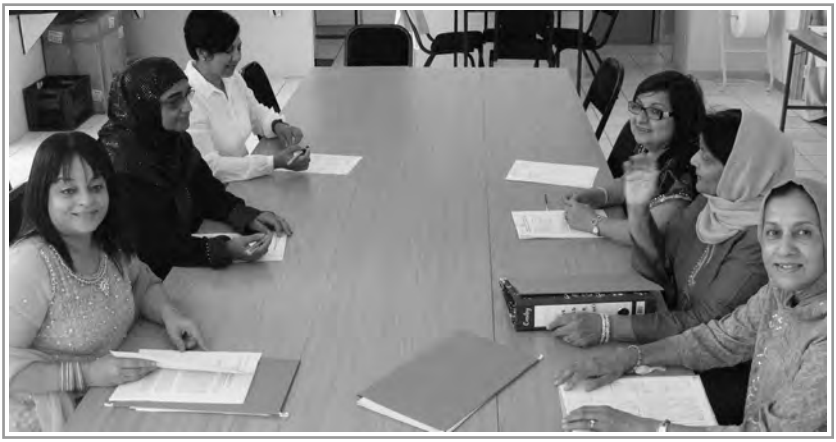
> The question is often raised as to how we make our selections, and we reply 'on merit' but this is not strictly so. We do have a soft spot for African students and anyone recommended by the Institute of Race Relations, the Inanda Seminary or some such institution is given priority when the applications are weeded. It also happens that when the applications are being discussed, someone of the Committee knows the peculiar circumstances of the applicant, his or her family background. Being women, we lend a ready ear to these factors and even if, on the merit of their academic achievement two students show equal promise, it is the one in whose application we have gained a deeper insight who will receive the aid. This may not be entirely fair but in the absence of a better system it remains the one in operation…It shall be my strong recommendation, as the President of the Group to the Bursary Committee, to continue taking this personal interest in the applicants and let those who want to read a racialistic attitude in our disbursements do so.

Reflecting on the process in 2008, Mayat accepted that while bursaries 'are really given on merit' and financial need, the process is subjective. Applications may be similar in most regards 'but somebody in the Group knows the condition of one and they get priority. I think this happens with all groups, but

we do try and spread it out.' While African students have received bursaries, in recent years, the number of beneficiaries has dropped, according to Hajira Omar, partly because the Group has lost contact with its one-time African membership in townships as well as with the Inanda Seminary and the South African Institute of Race Relations, which had referred many applicants in the past. The drive towards racial integration has ironically lost its 'fire' in the post-apartheid era, and there is a greater availability of resources for African students under the new government led by the African National Congress. After the implementation of the Group Areas legislation moved Africans into townships, and during the period of school boycotts and the political involvement of youth in the 1980s, when schooling was disrupted, the numbers of African applicants who were supported by the Group dropped. The impression of the Group seems to be also that residential instability and poor postal services impacted their decision-making about students who, 'when you send accounts or something, they have moved on. If there is an address, the post people don't do any postal deliveries there, only at postboxes. Very few Africans had postboxes then.'

There have been few applications from white students. In 1978 the treasurer reported that for the first time applications had been received from two white South Africans. While the Group policy remains that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, colour or creed, it is clear that, early on, the profile of beneficiaries depended upon the avenues of contact between racially segregated residential/linguistic/religious communities. Currently, the distribution of loans reflects a broader trend of voluntary insularity between apartheid-classified racial groups and the growing centrality of Muslim identity claimed within the Group, perhaps reflecting external trends and the politicisation of Islam globally.

The profile of applicants has changed in other ways too. The treasurer reported in June 2003 that there was 'an increasing number of applicants for bursary loans from professionals and people in good commercial standing. The bursary committee tries to select students who come from poor families but a sympathetic eye is also cast on those students from better-off families who have outstanding results. We trust that no one will take undue advantage of our soft-heartedness.' This point was reiterated by Zarina Moolla in the Group's 2004 jubilee brochure, when she wrote that as a result of the higher cost of living and



The Bursary Committee, 2010: (clockwise from left) Shameema Mayat, Shairbanu Lockhat, Hajira Omar, Zarina Moolla, Ayesha Vorajee and Fatima Mayat.

massive escalation in the cost of education, 'the number of applicants in need of assistance has increased exponentially in recent years'. Moolla added that this was due to the 'increased emphasis on education as a means to improve the lives of their families. Education has always been a window of opportunity for many to establish a career and ultimately financial independence.'[61]

The Group had always assisted students based on need, but the definition of 'need' has changed with the perception that tertiary education is no longer a privilege but a necessity and that this necessity is becoming increasingly unaffordable for large numbers of people. Among professional families, the economic reality is that it is now more challenging to pass on a similar standard of living to one's children unless each earns a degree. And, as a single wage-earner can no longer provide even for a nuclear-family household, occupational training has become a standard expectation for middle-class girls. Zarina Moolla confirmed that

> the [financial] demographics of students has changed over the years. Previously the students were the needy, needy, needy students – now it's a middle-income family which probably has three kids at university and can't afford to put the kids through, who would need assistance – in which case we ask them to pay back a certain amount – depending on how much they are earning. They pay us back in the interim while the student is still

> studying. So we don't recoup more than what we have given them, but at least they pay us back at a faster rate and the student owes less at the end of their period.

The application process remains rigorous. Students fill out application forms at the Group's head office detailing their matriculation results, the course they wish to pursue, the institution at which they intend studying and their parents' income. Payslips and even tax returns are checked. The applications are collated by the Group's administrator, Safoura Mohammed, and scrutinised by a small pre-selection group made up of members from the Education Trust, which compiles a shortlist. According to Ayesha Vorajee,

> we sift through the applications and those that we feel are worthwhile and so on, and we look through the background as well [to obtain] detailed information regarding their parents' employment and so on, and then we interview them. A group of us get together, call the applicants in, and interview them with their parents.

Vorajee believes that this stringent procedure is necessary to avoid 'supporting lifestyles rather than people who are in need'. Care is taken not to make the process onerous as some applicants find it uncomfortable. According to Zarina Moolla,

> some parents find it very hard, thinking they are coming cap in hand. We make it a point to make people feel as comfortable as possible because you can, on the face of the father sometimes, see how difficult it is to come because, I think, it makes the person feel like they've not been able to fend for their own family and that becomes very difficult. So I always tell the groups who I am interviewing, 'Just make the people as comfortable as possible'.

Most applicants are young and cover a range of professions, including beauticians and interior designers, though most are undergraduates at universities or technikons. According to the presidential report of June 1996, the Group tries to 'persuade students to take up technical subjects at Technikon rather than enter for the academic field and we hope students will oblige. However, we have about eleven medical students whom we are helping.' Very rarely, bursaries are provided for private colleges, which are much more expensive.

An exception may be made, for example, for someone who is disabled and needs to attend a private college for this reason. From 1995 to around 1998, the Group, along with several other donors, assisted Zainab Ismail and Ziatoon Suleman, who went to study at the College of Shariah at Zarga Private University in Jordan. They also co-sponsored Rashida Amod, who studied at the Al Azhar University in Cairo. All three students studied Arabic and Islamic studies. The rationale for assisting these young women was to create a core of women educated in Islamic theology.

Safoura Mohammed and Zarina Moolla monitor students throughout their studies, meeting regularly to check on progress and year-end results. This was easier in the past when the university mailed the reports to the Group. However, this has been stopped because of privacy concerns on the part of universities. 'Problem students' are called in and in extreme cases the bursary may be stopped because of non-performance. This is rare as the screening process is thorough and most students, according to Zarina Moolla, are highly motivated: 'Generally the students who are studying on bursaries are much more committed to completing their studies because it's their way out [of poverty].' Successful applicants are also encouraged to give time to charity work and community involvements as a way of passing on a portion of the privilege they have been awarded.

Involvement on the Bursary Committee has had a mixed impact on members. Hajira Omar said that after interviewing students she 'feels devastated that there is such a big need and that there should be five more Groups that aim for a similar kind of thing – we could have even more really.' Examining individual applications and the financial problems facing many families has driven home the extent of the poverty in the country. At the same time, as Zarina Moolla points out,

> there is a sense of fulfilment in that, you know, there are days I just feel I don't know what I'm doing this for and then you walk into a supermarket and somebody will come up to you and say, 'Thank you, my son's finished his studies thanks to your Group', and you feel you've made a difference to somebody else. All my life I have worked to make a positive difference.

The Group has hundreds of letters on file from bursary holders expressing gratitude for assistance, such as the following, which was received in January 2006:

> It is me, Hamid Ahmed, the student from Natal University who you bought air ticket back home to Sudan in September 2004. I am so sorry for failing to contact U long before. I thank U again for UR assistance and want to tell U that I worked hard and managed to get a job with a British NGO in my home town as 'Business Development Officer' last April 2005. I am paid well ($450) a month which is enough to provide for my family, mother, relatives, and also make some savings. I never forget about U by the way and used to tell my friends about UR good deed. By the way now I can make some contribution to UR fund so plse tell how. Thank U and my greetings to all of U. Hamid. Please reply so that I know my message has been delivered.

Another recipient of financial assistance, Dr Z Seedat, wrote to the Group on 3 March 1998:

> On completing my degree, I have sat back many times thinking of all who made this achievement possible and without doubt the Women's Cultural Group were amongst the tops. Receiving the bursary did not only mean financial backing, but the encouragement of knowing that you had put faith in me. For this I thank you sincerely. I know it takes hard work to keep this fund going, but remember always that my success, like in the cases of others, belongs very much to the Group as well. All my *duas* are with you, so that you may continue with the good work.

Shairbanu Lockhat related an incident that took place in February 2008, when a father visited the office and she asked:

> 'Have you come to pay?' 'No, I have already paid that bursary. I've come for my other daughter's bursary.' Then he tells us, 'Thank you so much for the bursary. I couldn't have done it without the bursary. My son has a BCom thanks to the Cultural Group.' And he wrote us a lovely letter. So when you see this, the efforts and the rewards when somebody tells you that you are doing something right, that somebody is really thanking

you for it. But there are people who say, 'Oh yes, you people are all talk, talk, talk' – it's not all talk, as you know.

This chapter has tracked changes in the attitudes of parents towards education, especially the education of girls, as well as the availability of educational facilities. The Group's members have always believed in the importance of educating girls and more especially in their ability. They probably felt vindicated when a young Pietermaritzburg girl, Amina Jogiat, became, in the late 1970s, the first Indian matriculation candidate to score distinctions in all her subjects. She subsequently completed her medical degree, being voted the top medical student. But there are signs, worrying for some, that the wheel of education is turning full circle.

Since the formation of the Group, the majority of membership has been Muslim and this identity has become increasingly pertinent in recent years. Ironically, in the post-apartheid period, there have been crucial changes in attitudes among many Muslims regarding education – reflecting a rise in conservative gender views and mistrust of cosmopolitan and modern values in relation to religious identity. Many parents are reluctant to send their children, especially girls, to government schools for a variety of reasons, including a perception that the standard of education has dropped or that children would learn 'un-Islamic' values from teachers, peers and the syllabus. For example, the Muslim religious body Jamiatul Ulama warned in its newsletter *Al-Jamiat* in May 1998 that Muslims were sitting on a 'time-bomb' by leaving their children in secular institutions: 'Who is unaware that numerous young boys and girls are losing their chastity at university and high schools? In the kind of environment that we have been submerged into, what steps have we taken to counter the onslaught of the forces of evil on our children?'[62] Some parents do believe that their children will start taking drugs, get into gangs, feel socially pressured to attend dances, may not get time off for prayer or festivals, etc., and instead choose to send them to Muslim or Islamic schools. The term 'Muslim schools' is used in the literature to refer to schools where the pupils are almost entirely Muslim but where a secular syllabus is followed with some Arabic and Islamic education. Starting with Lockhat Islamia College in 1985, Muslim schools have sprung up countrywide and fall under the ambit of the Association of Muslim Schools. The nomenclature 'Islamic' refers to schools which primarily follow an

Islamic syllabus, with elementary English language and mathematics education. These schools are mainly attended by girls. Increasingly, large numbers of boys have begun to attend the various Darul Ulooms (Islamic seminaries), which have mushroomed in the past decade, to complete aalim courses.[63]

The Women's Cultural Group has disbursed several million rand over the past half-century and continues its advocacy of education. The ways in which funds have been allocated reflects the educational transformation in the region, especially pertaining to women. Until the 1960s the focus was on school education as that is where the greatest need was. From the 1960s, as more girls completed high school and made their way into university, the funding of the Group was directed towards university students. The transformation over the last five decades among South African Indians has been remarkable. According to the 2001 population census, 37 377 Indian Muslim males and 32 660 females countrywide had matriculated. In addition, 4 644 males and 4 278 females had diplomas in addition to matriculation certificates; 4 122 males and 2 988 females had bachelor's degrees;[64] 1 146 males and 946 females had honours degrees; while 1 677 males and 754 females had doctoral degrees. While parity has not been reached, the change has been remarkable given the attitudes towards girls' education two generations ago. Many parents, like Zarina Moolla, regard education

> as a way for people to move forward in life and to affirm themselves. Education is something I can give my child, which he'll take wherever he goes. Money, if I give my child, will just teach him arrogance and it's gone tomorrow. If you don't give your child an education and there is a tyrannical husband situation or something like that, what is she going to do with herself?

Moolla's question is pertinent because Muslim society is undergoing fundamental changes. One trend is the stark class division with better-off Muslims having access to expensive private education while the majority are forced to attend government schools where the education is of a poor quality. Another trend is for increasing numbers of young Muslims, mainly girls but also fairly substantial numbers of boys, opting for religious rather than secular education. At the same time, many more Muslims are marrying at a young age and, while this has not been quantified, the anecdotal evidence based on the experience of

Group members who are beseeched for financial assistance from abandoned wives, the lectures of mawlanas in mosques and the websites of various Islamic organisations suggest that divorce rates are increasing markedly. Group member Mana Rajah, for example, commented:

> The divorces are due to [couples] getting married too young. The girls don't realise the responsibility of a marriage and running a home and kitchen, you know. And everybody wants to live on their own. There's too much of 'I don't want to live with my in-laws', too much of that – and then they realise that they can't manage. There's lots of homes where the mothers are sending food every day [to married daughters] because they want to study, they want to do this or they are too busy with their children, so the girls' mothers are sending food.

It is too early to predict the long-term sociological repercussions of these trends, not only for Muslim identity formation, but also for the inner domain of the family, home, extended family networks, the role of women and the economic situation of Muslims. What is clear, however, is that these trends will fundamentally transform some of the patterns in gender and family, and especially the education of girls, witnessed from the mid-1970s.