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"KNEES & FEET TOGETHER, SHOULDERS BACK AND CHEST OUT"[1]

Embodying the Hidden Curriculum through Women's Girlhood Narratives

Aakanksha D'Cruz

Introduction

In a 1988 classic titled "The Contested Terrain of Reproduction: Class and Gender in Schooling in India", Raka Ray lays out the "social charter" of an elite all-girls' convent school, St. Mary's Convent (SMC), located in urban Calcutta (Ray, 1988). The social charter refers to the institutional values and morals of the school which girl students are encouraged to imbibe and inculcate (Ray, 1988). She argues that the social charter of SMC was to ordain schoolgirls with institutional prestige, retain their respectable status in society and produce "ladylike" elite women who would enter professional fields and marry elite men (Ray, 1988). While highlighting the various ways in which girls resisted the ideology of the school, she briefly discusses the role of discipline in upholding and actualising the social charter of the school. However, the concept of discipline at school remains undertheorised in her work. Ray (1988) neglects the dynamics of disciplinary power which surrounds conformity with school rules; consequently, she does not elaborate upon the manner in which the system of discipline operates, thrives and maintains itself.

In the spirit of Ray's (1988) work, this chapter attempts to fill this gap. It postulates that the disciplining of the body is central to the understanding of the hidden curriculum at school. The "hidden curriculum" shares a theoretical similarity with the "social charter" and holds a solid potential for a renewed exploration of the discursive space of the school that centres the body and is relevant to feminist inquiries into girl femininity. To buttress its hypothesis, the chapter attempts to understand the "hidden curriculum" of the Delhi Convent School[2] (DCS), an elite all-girl's convent school located in Delhi, through an analysis of its alumnae's coming-of-age narratives of girlhood.

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The interview method was used to correspond with DCS alumnae. Interviews of eight women, all of whom graduated school roughly between the years 1970 and 2015 (approx. age range 23–73 years), were first audio recorded using an Android phone with their consent and then transcribed for the purpose of analysis. An attempt was made to factor in age while approaching the research participants to foreground a diverse range of concerns informed by the varying/changing context. This set of eight research participants was variegated in terms of their ages and religious affiliations; however, it was largely homogenous in its caste and class (upper-middle/upper class) composition.

The interviews were based on a premeditated set of questions prepared around the themes of self-identification (appearance/dressing, morality-sexuality), academic performance and goals of education, extracurricular or outside-school activities and school prestige. The duration of most interviews ranged from half an hour to slightly over an hour; each interview was concluded in one sitting without any follow-up. In order to retain the experiential richness of the responses, the researcher worked with a restricted sample size. The interviews were mostly in English (except for a few sentences when the interviewees spoke in Hindi) as all the participants were comfortable with the language. The researcher attempted to capture the lived experience of what it was like to be a student at DCS through women's memories of their girlhood; hence, visiting the actual site of the school was tangential.

Throughout the course of this chapter, discipline at school is understood as the operational logic of an institutional space. It is imagined not merely as a systemic mechanism but as a modality of power (Foucault, 1975b). The following sections will discuss (i) the implications of fallibility of memory on retrospective narration of girlhood, (ii) disciplining of the body as the linchpin of the hidden curriculum at school and (iii) the morning assembly as a mode of disciplining and the ritualistic nature of inspection of the school uniform.

Speaking in Retrospect: Women's Girlhood Narratives and the Memory of Coming-of-Age

> memory is unreliable, fictionalizing inevitable, and thus the self constructed by the autobiographer is by definition contingent.
>
> —*Christy Rishoi on Mary McCarthy's* Memories of a Catholic Girlhood *(Rishoi, 2003, p.113)*

Qualitative empirical researches on women's coming-of-age use the interview method to generate "data", the nature of which can be very similar to narratives. The interview method as a method of inquiry into individual experience should be conceptualised so as to acknowledge the "narrative character" of the conversation which takes place between the interviewer and the respondent (Chase, 2003).

This would require such a research to begin with the assumption that "the impulse to narrate is such an integral part of human experience that interviewees will tell stories even if we don't encourage them to do so … [and] people make sense of experience … through narration" (Chase, 2003, p.273)

One of the factors which shape retrospective narratives of girlhood is the idea of fallibility of memory—the inability to remember or forgetfulness and the possibility it opens for the narrator to improvise to fill the gaps. In the context of modernity, where historical time is thought of as calendrical and teleological (Schwarz, 2010), memory can seem to be an "unreliable" (Rishoi, 2003, p.113) and a "fallible" basis of retrospective accounts of individual experience. In such an instance, time is understood as an interruption in memory (Schwarz, 2010).

Contrary to the idea that time interrupts with narrative, this temporal dimension of retrospective accounts makes it possible for women and girls as narrators to reexamine and retell their past. What does it mean to remember one's past? The act of remembrance is a way for one to rewrite one's past in the light of the present (Freeman, 2010). In telling the past, the narrator also retells her "self" and claims her "subjectivity" (Rishoi, 2003). Rishoi (2003) argues that for women, narrating their story is a way to "construct their identities" (p.73) in a historical context where they "have had little or no say in the construction of [their] own socially acknowledged identity" (p.112).

Rishoi (2003) argues that coming-of-age narratives do not only involve the construction and reclamation of the self but also reveal the problems with imagining a consolidated and singular self. Memories of girlhood for women are not like a black-and-white flashback as depicted in the movies. Instead, narratives of girlhood spoken or written from memory are a "richly textured, multivocal text" (Freeman, 2010, p.263). Therefore, the idea of "becoming", as explored by Lal (2013), is critical to understanding girlhood narratives of coming-of-age. It attempts to dislodge this idea of a linear progression of time in narratives (birth and death, beginning and end) (Lal, 2013). When one reads girls' and women's coming-of-age narratives from the lens of "becoming", they appear to be very dynamic and non-static.

Another factor which shapes and contributes to the "texture" of retrospective accounts is their capacity to contain "stories within a story". As Mark Freeman (2010) puts it, " much of what we remember about the personal past is suffused with *other* others' memories … with stories we have read and images we have seen, in books and movies and beyond" (p.263). Therefore, not only do retrospective accounts depend upon what can be remembered but also on what can be articulated and put into perspective by the narrator. It is also shaped by the terms of contemporary popular and public discourses which allow and admonish them to narrate their stories in certain ways. Much of how women narrate their history and life experience is shaped by the contemporary media, popular culture and political rhetoric, etc. (Freeman, 2010). The act of narrating is a social process whereby embodied in this process is the relationship between the narrator

and culture (Chase, 2003). Thus, through the analysis of narratives obtained from interviews, researchers can understand the larger social and cultural framework within which a particular narrative of the interview participant unfurled (Chase, 2003). Accounts of coming-of-age and girlhood narratives hold meaningful insights. Since this chapter mainly looks at schoolgirl narratives of women which were obtained through the method of interview, the following briefly discusses the methodological concerns which the researcher had to grapple with.

The interview transcription and the researcher's methodological musings were guided by a reading of Ann Oakley's (2003) classic essay titled "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms". In this essay, she begins with the idea that social researchers using the interview method often skip over accounting for

> social/personal characteristics of those doing the interviewing; interviewee's feelings about being interviewed and about the interview, interviewer's feelings about the interviewees; and the quality of interviewer-interviewee interaction; hospitality offered by interviewees to interviewers; attempts by the interviewees to use interviewers as sources of information; and the extension of interviewer-interviewee encounters into more broadly-based social relationships.
>
> *(Oakley, 2003, p.243)*

According to Oakley (2003), interviewing is a means of collecting information for the interviewer even if it is stylised as a conversation. Therefore, an interview is a "psuedo-conversation" whereby the interviewer builds a rapport with the interviewee on one hand and constantly reminds herself about the rules of scientific inquiry on the other (Oakley, 2003). The interviewer juggles between being friendly and distant; the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is defined by this tussle (Oakley, 2003). In many ways, this push-and-pull is reflective of how conventional conceptualisation of the interview method objectifies the interviewee (Oakley, 2003). Interviews, to a great extent, impinge upon how the interviewer can "manipulate" the interviewee into articulating responses in a manner suitable to the research needs of the interviewer (Oakley, 2003).

Despite the fact that most questions that were presented to the interviewees came from an already prepared questionnaire, their flow and the order in which they were posed depended upon the themes the interviewees touched upon. There were several other questions, specific to each of their personal stories, which were asked and went beyond the questionnaire but were very pertinent to the themes of this research. While interviewing, attention was paid to the moments when the interviewer would interrupt a participant. For instance, more than once the interviewees spoke about their experience of being a teacher or a lawyer or a journalist instead of their experience of school as a girl. These stories contained within them subtle insights into how their experiences of girlhood shaped who they became as

adults and career professionals. Therefore, the researcher refrained from cutting into the interviewee's narration and only steered the interaction minimally.

For most participants, especially for the ones who had graduated from school decades ago, the interview was a trip down the memory lane. Since the interviews required women participants to talk about their girlhood in retrospect, they were slightly anxious about their ability to recall details of their school life. They were also concerned about providing usable content, particularly when the theme of discipline was not at the core of their reminiscence of their school life. Their valid concerns have been incorporated and addressed earlier within this section. It was argued that rather than perceiving time as an interruption in memory, research projects on girlhood working with the interview method should embrace the opportunity the passage of time provides to the narrator to retell, reclaim, revisit and re-envisage their girlhood. Such coming-of-age narratives present an insight into girlhood that is multi-vocal, multi-layered and richly textured with contextual details from the past and the present.

D for Discipline: The Hidden Curriculum and Body Disciplining

Works of Haraway (1985), Oakley (2000), Harding (1987) etc., in their discussions on feminist research methodology, challenge the notion that the basis of knowledge lies in the objective and not the experiential (Haraway, 1985; Harding, 1987; Oakley, 2000). They unapologetically challenge the Cartesian mind–body duality whereby the emotional and the embodied are seen as detrimental and opposed to the cognitive and logical. In other words, the idea that there is a separation between the mind and the body and it is the latter that reposes knowledge is destabilised. The following discussion aligns itself with this intellectual stream and demonstrates why discussions on the hidden curriculum should revolve around practices aimed at disciplining the body.

"Hidden curriculum", as articulated by Anyon (1980), Bowles and Gintis (1976) and Ivan Illich (1971), comes from a Marxist analysis of the site of the school, educational curriculum and pedagogy (Anyon, 1980; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Illich, 1971). Hidden curriculum, as defined by Anyon (1980) in "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work", is "tacit preparation for relating to the processes of production in a particular way" (Anyon, 1980, p.89). She observes that in a "working-class school" emphasis was laid on rote learning, contrary to the "affluent professional school" which encouraged creativity and initiative (Anyon, 1980). The official curriculum in both schools were similar; however, the "hidden curriculum" prepared the working-class student to be an obedient follower whereas the affluent school student to be an assertive leader (Anyon, 1980).

How can the concept of "hidden curriculum" be relevant for feminist research on girl education? Hidden curriculum refers to the ways in which coded manuals, teaching guidelines and course curriculum play out in classroom interaction, teacher's expectations from girl students and standards of academic and character

evaluation etc. (Anyon, 1980; Bergenhenegouwen, 1987). It establishes a very specific and peculiar relationship between learning-at-school and the gendered disciplining of the body. Despite the absence of an explicit mention of the body, it is a running theme in Anyon's (1980) work. A close reading of the text can help one extrapolate the significance and place of the body within the hidden curriculum. Consider the following quote:

> students from different social class backgrounds are rewarded for classroom behaviors that correspond to personality traits allegedly rewarded in the different occupational strata—the working class for docility and obedience, the managerial classes for initiative and personal assertiveness.
>
> *(Anyon, 1980, p.67)*

Anyon's mention of docility widens the scope for a theoretical exploration of the hidden curriculum which accounts for and is inclusive of the body. A reading of Anyon's (1980) hidden curriculum in conjunction with Foucault's conceptualisation of docility would allow scholars of education and gender studies to argue that the hidden curriculum has a gendered dimension to it. According to Foucault, docile bodies are made useful and resourceful through constant practice of good posture and precision of handwriting, time-bound work routines with fixed intervals for bathroom breaks, and the civility of table manners (Foucault, 1975a). Thus, by incorporating Foucault's conception of docility within the understanding of the hidden curriculum, one can argue that disciplinary practices make bodies docile by facilitating the manipulation and control of the body and its activities.

Martin (1998) illustrates how the "hidden curriculum" of schools plays a quintessential role in gendering of bodies from an early age. Hidden curriculum, as the term suggests, is the insidious and latent syllabi at schools which train and discipline pupils into the gendered ways of the world (Martin, 1998). There is an unspecified and tacit aspect to the hidden curriculum, slightly distinct, and even subtler than the "subtle ways" of coded rules (Bergenhenegouwen, 1987). She shows how pre-school girls and boys, through their play and learning, become aware of their bodies—how to move their bodies, how to use space, how to interact with other bodies and how to present their own (Martin, 1998). How the body is managed, controlled, restrained and reprimanded is also linked to cognitive learning within the classroom (Martin, 1998). In other words, what appears as disciplining of the body is also disciplining the mind (Martin, 1998). The disciplinary curriculum prepares one for an outside world which has its foundations built in gendered systems of disciplinary power (Martin, 1998).

Martin (1998) further observes during the course of her fieldwork how preschool teachers constantly tidy the girls' ponytails, straighten their dresses, tuck their shirts in, etc. This doesn't only make the girls aware of the comportment socially suitable for them but also makes them conscious of their appearance (Martin, 1998). Often, a large number of rules for girls revolve around how they

clothe their bodies. School girls are routinely scrutinised for maintaining the norms of respectable femininity. These are ways of encoding and encrypting in garments culturally generated symbols of gender performance. Clothes inscribe meanings and symbols on bodies much like written texts. Therefore, garments can be "read" (viewed) and "written" (worn) (Symes & Meadmore, 1996).

Clothing bodies in particular ways signifies whether it's a masculine or a feminine body (Martin, 1998). Morris (2005), during the course of his school ethnography, discovered how the norms of appropriate dressing also aligned with clear boundaries of heteronormative performance of femininity/masculinity. "Bodily adornment" (Martin, 1998) makes its subject aware of their gender identity and the gender role culturally compatible with it (Martin, 1998). Therefore, the boys were admonished from wearing earrings whereas the girls were warned against dressing in an overly sexual manner (Morris, 2005).

According to Morris (2005), the hidden curriculum teaches pupils about their race, gender and class identities and monitors them to "rework the behavior and appearance of students so their bodies display acceptable, normative comportment" (Morris, 2005, p.27). Morris's (2005) work shows how in American public schools girls and boys of colour who hail from low-income households, and/or wear community-specific attires, are stereotypically branded as problematic, not very "ladylike" or "potentially dangerous" (Morris, 2005, p.29). He also discusses how the school monitors appearance and clothing to hide their poverty, limit gang activity and encourage upward social mobility by imposing a formal and uniform dress code which will make them look presentable (Morris, 2005). Hiding poverty is important to open avenues for better jobs (Morris, 2005). Thus, Morris (2005) shows how dressing a particular way is culturally critical for securing social dignity and upward mobility. He therefore argues that the school uniform is a marker of "cultural capital" (Morris, 2005).

Cultural capital refers to qualitative aspects of socio-economic status like language abilities, exposure to intellectual ideas, "parental influence", etc. (Morris, 2005, p.26). Bourdieu's formulation of the reproduction theory as "cultural capital" entails the idea that there are certain cultural norms and values identified with those in positions of power and high social status (Morris, 2005). It is with respect to this that Morris (2005) argues that the school uniform is a marker of cultural capital. A uniform dress code is a means through which students can acquire cultural capital. Wearing a uniform bestows upon the wearer a set of privileges (Symes & Meadmore, 1996; Weber, 2004). Donning particular kinds of uniforms (military, medical, reputed schools etc.) is linked to the notion of institutional prestige. This "prestige" and "privilege" which comes with an association to reputed schools is what would be theoretically classified as "cultural capital". Thus, the hidden curriculum, by prescribing a uniform dress code, streamlines the appearances of girl/boy students to make them conform to gender norms; this conformity allows the students to acquire cultural capital by making claims to the institutional prestige of the school.

When Women Tell Tales about School[3]: Uniform Inspection during the Morning Assembly

In the interviews with DCS alumnae, the morning assembly was identified as a mode of disciplining. This is not to say that disciplinary power ceased to exist or was interrupted after the morning assembly at DCS. However, it was during the morning assembly when discipline was enforced with utmost vitality through the enforcement of rules of dressing, reiteration of the norms of "decent" appearance as well as orderly filing, queuing and management of the student body. It was at this juncture that disciplinary power was starkly visible and detectable at DCS. The following are excerpts taken from the transcribed interviews:

> Students didn't like that the captains [house prefects] would every morning check the girls' uniform. It was hated among everyone.
>
> —*Interviewee No. 8 (late 1960s–1981)* [4]

> But I mean in the assembly they used to like check everybody and be like, "You have made a plait" or "You have not made a plait" and then there were the nails. Your nails had to be like … cut in a manner so that the white portion of the nails are not visible. Which I thought was too much. And then the shoes had to be polished everyday … and [we had to] be prim and proper. And then the sports skirts, we had red skirts.
>
> —*Interviewee No. 1 (2002–2015)*

> teachers would start hemming out our skirts, pulling up our pants … you know like, [they] tried to be dictatorial. Then a lot of us said, "What the 'f'?" We had done a lot of protests because … at school parades and stuff.
>
> —*Interviewee No. 4 (1998–2006)*

> You know what? We used to form queues and go out and they would just single out and bring one person out. In middle school, the uniform inspector was Mrs. A., the Hindi teacher for some time. Everybody would be in a queue and keep climbing the stairs and, everybody who would pass… they would be monitoring you from top to bottom and you would be scanned for it, and then pulled out … yea, of course [this happened during] the assembly time … They would pull people out for different reasons, I didn't have to face a lot of it.
>
> —*Interviewee No. 2 (2002–2012)*

The above pinpoint at the fact that body disciplining largely revolves around the school uniform. "Scanning" of the body, hair and school uniform, penalty and punishment for improper dressing and "regimentation" (Bhandari, 2014) of all students to meet the standards of character and values set by the school can be attributed to the school system of discipline. All of this occurs in DCS right after

the morning assembly when students file in queues and move towards their classrooms. It would not be far-fetched to say that the inspection of uniforms forms a major part of school assemblies in India as a similar account was found in the work of Parul Bhandari (2014). Bhandari (2014) writes the following about the disciplinary dimension of the school assembly in her ethnographic study of St. Margaret's, an all-girls' convent school in Delhi:

> After the assembly the council members [made of students] check the pupils for proper uniform which includes short nails, no applying of *kajal* (black eye pencil), calf length socks, no expensive watches or earrings, no short skirts, clean shoes, ankle-length socks and tidy hair. All those who do not follow the rules discussed earlier are asked to step out of the queue and if possible, the mistake is immediately addressed … Otherwise pupils are let off with a warning.
>
> *(Bhandari, 2014, p.196)*

Symes and Meadmore(1996) argue that unlike other forms of dressing which are flexible towards variegated attire expressions, "the textuality of the uniform is more rule governed, and the organization of its component apparel is a matter of detailed articulation of manuals of procedure" (Symes & Meadmore, 1996, p.173). Uniforms impress on the body "etiquettes of modernity" (Symes & Meadmore, 1996, p.175) like cleanliness, authority, "formal behavior" (Martin, 1998, p.500), "ambition" (Morris, 2005, p.26), a sense of duty and responsibility, a "sense of institutional affiliation" (Symes & Meadmore, 1996, p.176) etc. Therefore, unlike any other piece of clothing, uniforms are supposed to exude a degree of formality and respectability.

In the case of DCS, girls could legitimise their femininity and gain respectability through the *Salwar-Kameez*. The school uniform allowed them to make a legitimate claim to cultural capital—the respectability granted to them due to their association with an elite convent school. Historically, girls can be found at the crossroads of the tradition-modernity debate whereby their bodies become a site of semiotic friction between westernisation and nationalist revivalism (Chatterjee, 1989; Kumar, 2010; Mani, 1987). Partha Chatterjee (1989) looks at representations of women in 19th-century Bengali literary works. He comes across various social parodies which ridicule Bengali women who in their attempt to westernise mimicked "memsahebs" (Chatterjee, 1989). Clearly, Bengali women who adopted tastes similar to women of the west, like using western cosmetics, buying jewellery, reading novels etc., were criticised for indulging in luxurious pursuits instead of taking care of the household (Chatterjee, 1989). At DCS, by adorning the *Salwar-Kameez*, the girls obeyed norms of vanity-rid "simplicity" and "modesty". In this way, they laid claims to modernity without having to forgo the virtue "traditionally" linked to domesticity, chastity and virginity.

The previously quoted interview excerpts point towards frequent instances of rule-breaking and the extraordinary measures taken by the school management to

curb them. The frequent rule violation due to a certain type of self-stylisation is actually equivalent to girls' assertion of their sexuality. Consider the following:

> There was no judgment from the peers, so if you were wearing *Kajal* … or if you wear multiple ear-piercings. I mean that was the new fad that had started back then. Even if you've had your nose pierced, it was cool. Like, your classmates would see you as a very cool person and would go like wow! Even I would think, "Cool, yaar … cool. That's pretty cool". But for teachers, especially some teachers I mean, "Look at them … What is this? Your *Salwar* keeps sagging …" No, not *Salwar*, Skirt. At that time, there was a trend to wear skirts really low. So just like men had sagging jeans back then, girls had this trend like …
>
> —*Interviewee No. 2 (2002–2012)*

Interestingly, essential to the patriarchal-bureaucratic gaze of the school authorities is the Madonna/whore(chaste/lascivious) dichotomy. By "*it was cool*", the participant reiterates towards the presence of recalcitrant behaviour, which while condoning school rules also resisted the institutional hallmark of DCS's restrained girl sexuality. The school authorities resorted to strict means of inspection during the morning assembly in a bid to restore the disciplinary routine and deemed the sagging skirts and broad/upgoing hemlines to be an aberration. The disruption caused by girls' vestigial resistance is snubbed through an almost ritualistic inspection of their uniforms during the morning assembly.

Based on existing literature on school assemblies in India, one can say that school assemblies are usually composite of—morning prayer/hymn/chanting, the national pledge, principal's address to the student body, performance of skits/play/dance/song by students etc. (Bhandari, 2014; Thapan, 1986). Most of these find a space in the three separate morning assemblies held for junior, middle and senior schools in DCS. Components of the morning assembly like the prayer and pledge have been actively identified as "rituals" by existing literature due to their basis and symbolism rooted in the religious, philosophical, secular or nationalist ethos of schools (Bhandari, 2014; Thapan, 1986). Thapan (1986) argues that morning assembly is a daily ritual constitutive of the institutional culture of schools. The routine everyday-ness of morning assemblies as a ritual takes away from it the ceremonialism conventionally associated with rituals (Thapan, 1986). It is nonetheless a ritual, as the activities which form a part of the morning assembly configure symbolism around school history, values it imparts and basically its "expressive order" (Ray, 1988; Thapan, 1986). The expressive orders refer to the value and morals the school imparts which form the basis of students' personal characters, social status and a sense of belonging towards the school (Ray, 1988). In the case of DCS, the morning assembly becomes an inevitable daily ritual that all girls collectively take part in.

Aforementioned activities like praying and pledging have been read and studied as ritualistic components of the morning assembly. However, the uniform inspection and disciplining of the body during the morning assembly have not been theorised as ritualistic. They instead form part of the field of "organisational practices" of the school which revolve around the management of body, space and time or body in space-time (Thapan, 1986). Since the purpose of the inspection principle lies in ensuring efficiency and orderliness, it can be identified as a "convention" rather than a ritual. Hobsbawm (1983) while differentiating between "tradition" and "convention" identifies the former as ritualistic and symbolic and the latter as routine and rule-based with bureaucratic efficiency as its practical purpose. Therefore, uniform inspection—much like forming queues, filing students as per their height, sifting them on the basis of their gender, making them stand at one-arm lengths etc.—appears more like a convention rather than a ritual as it aims at organising, managing and controlling a large number of student bodies. Does this mean there is nothing ritualistic about the disciplinary practices undertaken during the ritual of the morning assembly? What makes checking uniforms "ritualistic" like other aforementioned segments of the morning assembly? Is it important for one to argue that there is something ritualistic about bodily disciplining?

In the earlier mentioned quotations from the interviews, one sees how the checking of the school uniform after the school assembly is a "rite of passage" for girls every morning. The disciplinary mechanisms of the morning assembly (along with other parts of the assembly) are informed by the values DCS upholds and imparts, and the standards of character and femininity it establishes for its students. Thus, uniform-checking is the exact moment which renders the boundaries between the ritual and the instrumental fuzzy (Thapan, 1986).

Quoting Thapan (1986) here seems apt—"conventional definitions of ritual need to break away from the straitjacket of 'ritual-sacred-symbolic' versus 'practical-profane-instrumental', and the contortions to which this simple-minded opposition leads" (Thapan, 1986, p.200). Arguing for the ritualistic roots of bodily discipline opens the avenue to disturb the notion that discipline at school is a given, and based on routine conventions which are rooted in everyday pragmatism (Hobsbawm, 1983). Instead, the checking of uniform as a routine ritual aspect of the morning assembly in DCS is a way to observe, celebrate, instil and legitimise the school's construction of an ideal girl and girlhood. By compelling students to abide by the rules it makes and stand for the values it covets, the ritual inspection of the school uniform during the morning assembly confers students with institutional prestige and stature.

The above leads one to the second inference—the morning assembly is a prominent site for disciplining, and by looking at the morning assembly as a mode of discipline one can understand how the system of discipline attains legitimacy and sustains itself. Morning assembly, as a mode of bodily disciplining, is when the disciplinary power is negotiated with, breached, restored and maintained. An enquiry into the morning assembly reveals—how girls resist school rules, are

reprimanded for it and made to conform. Thus, systems of discipline are based on the idea of ensuring maximum "utility" and "docility" of its subjects by invoking the minimum resistance to it (Foucault, 1975). In fact, the success of any disciplinary mechanism lies in making coercion, force and overt violence methods of the last resort (Bentham, 1995; O'Neill, 1986).What makes modern-day systems of regulation, surveillance and inspection deeply problematic is the intrusive manner in which they regulate the most minute details of people's life, behaviour and attitude (Foucault, 1975b). It is a system of power which is visible and yet undetectable, omnipresent yet unverifiable (Foucault, 1975b).

Conclusion

At the onset of this chapter, it was proposed that the hidden curriculum at school is embodied, and disciplinary practices aimed at rendering the body docile lie at its centre. In order to demonstrate the credibility of this assertion, coming-of-age narratives of women who graduated from the Delhi Convent School were analysed to perceive girlhood through the categories of appearance/dressing, morality-sexuality, academic performance and goals of education, extra-curricular or outside-school activities and school prestige. During the course of the chapter, the following key arguments were made—first, the hidden curriculum is an embodied concept and should be read within the framework of discipline and docility. Second, the morning assembly is identified as the time-space when disciplinary power is visible and verifiable. Through the inspection of the school uniform, the morning assembly transforms into a mode of disciplining. Third, rather than dismissing the temporality of retrospective girlhood narratives as an interruption, the role of forgetfulness in the re-articulation and re-examining of a woman's girlhood should be appreciated.

Notes

1 The title of this chapter is a re-incantation of a platitude meant for girl students at the Delhi Convent School (DCS).
2 Delhi Convent School (DCS) is used as a pseudonym for the school which is a minority institution.
3 This heading has been taken from an essay by Clark and Dhigra (1994) with the same title (Clark & Dhingra, 1994).
4 All the brackets next to the interviewee numbers are the years during which they were at DCS.

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