

Faculté des sciences économiques,
sociales, politiques et de communication
École des sciences politiques et sociales (PSAD)

Decolonizing feminism in India: a critical feminist perspective.

Author: Caroline Franzen

Promotor: Amine Ait-Chaalal

Reader: Elena Aoun

Academic year: 2021-2022

“Feminism, however, is a plant that only grows in its own soil (which is not to suggest that any ideas or movements anywhere are hermetically sealed off)”.

(Margot Badran, n.d.)

“There’s really no such thing as “the voiceless”. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard”.

(Arundhati Roy, 2004, Sydney Peace Prize receiving speech)

Table of contents.

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Declaration | 5 |
| Acknowledgments | 6 |
| Abstract. | 7 |
| List of figures..... | 9 |
| List of abbreviations..... | 9 |
| I. Introduction..... | 10 |
| A. Background and case study selection. | 10 |
| B. Statement of the research problem. | 11 |
| C. Methodological and contextual issues..... | 12 |
| II. Conceptual and theoretical framework..... | 16 |
| A. Post-colonial feminism, decolonial feminism and third-world feminism. | 16 |
| B. Critical Feminism..... | 21 |
| C. Post (-) colonial theory, decoloniality and decolonizing. | 23 |
| D. Intersectional feminism and standpoint feminism..... | 25 |
| E. Equality, equity and privilege. | 29 |
| III. Gap in literature..... | 30 |
| A. The contributions of Native feminism, Black Feminism and Latin American feminism..... | 30 |
| B. The case of India | 32 |
| IV. Research methodology. | 37 |
| A. Research design..... | 38 |
| A.1. Philosophical assumptions. | 38 |
| A.2. Research approaches. | 39 |
| A.3. Research strategy. | 40 |
| A.4. Research methods. | 42 |
| B. Research population and sampling..... | 42 |
| C. Data collection..... | 43 |
| C.1. Primary data. | 43 |
| C.2. Secondary data. | 44 |
| C.3. Validity and reliability. | 45 |
| D. Compliance with ethical standards..... | 45 |
| V. Main findings of the study..... | 47 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| A. Data analysis..... | 47 |
| B. Research findings and discussion..... | 49 |
| C. A proposed framework..... | 62 |
| VI. Conclusion..... | 63 |
| Bibliography..... | 67 |
| Scholarly monographs..... | 67 |
| Scientific articles..... | 70 |
| Electronic resources..... | 76 |
| Master & PhD thesis..... | 81 |
| Annex 1: photos taken by researcher of the student mobilization that took place at UAHU..... | 82 |
| Annex 2: interview questions..... | 82 |
| Annex 3: Informed Consent Form..... | 82 |
| Annex 4: Example of coded analysis..... | 86 |

Declaration

I, Caroline Franzen, declare that this dissertation submitted in part completion of the Master in Political Science, International Relations is entirely my own work, without having solicited illicit external assistance, that it is not the resumption of a work presented in another institution for review, and that it has never been published, in whole or in part.

All of the information (ideas, sentences, graphs, maps, tables, etc.) borrowed or referring to primary or secondary sources are referenced appropriately according to the current university method.

I declare that I have read and adhere to the **Code of ethics for students in matters of borrowings, quotations and exploitation of various sources** and know that the plagiarism constitutes serious misconduct.

Date: August 2022

Acknowledgments

To my thesis supervisor, professor Amine Ait-Chaalal, who directing me on this exciting topic that aligned with my personal interests, allowing this paper to be my own work while guiding me within my many ideas. For his support with full enthusiasm and encouragement all along the research process, thank you.

To professor Elena Aoun, reader of this thesis, for the attention she will be giving to my research. I hope my work will stimulate her interest.

To the participants who accepted to take part in my research, for being so accommodating due to time differences and the necessity to conduct the interviews via video call. Without their passionate participation and valuable input, the research could not have been successfully conducted.

To my professors at the UAHC who suggested readings on the topic, and showed much interest in discussing my research.

To my friends who offered to proofread my thesis once it was completed and showed their keen interest in my research. To my friends around the world met through my travels, who open my mind and my knowledge more and more every day. To my dear friend Saaniya, her valuable input and her help throughout my research, as well as for sharing with me parts of her culture for so many years and welcoming me in her country.

To my amazing parents, for always believing in me and their unconditional support in everything I pursue.

To my four amazing sisters, who each inspire me every single day.

Abstract.

This research realized in the context of my Master Thesis for the Master in Political Science, International Relations, aims to critically engage with post-colonial theories and decolonial feminism in order to offer a new understanding of knowledge production regarding feminism. This thesis is a call for the need of an intersectional awareness of neo-colonialism in feminist research. The research process relies on a theoretical and conceptual framework based mainly on postcolonial theory, and decolonial feminist theories. The researcher explores the contributions of Native feminism, Black Feminism and Latin-American Feminism in postcolonial feminist theorizing, although observes a gap in literature on the case of India.

This thesis adopts an inductive methodology to research the case study of Feminism in India. The research was realized through semi-structured interviews with women in India, which were then put in relation with various secondary data and the existing literature. The interviews conducted in this research offer a glimpse of the experiences of women in India relating to Feminism and suggests the diversity of feminist perspectives based on the diversity of experiences. More specifically, this study takes a critical feminist and intersectional approach to deconstructing and reshaping feminist academic research. The findings have brought forward various elements for theorizing feminism in India, such as such diversity of experiences between countries but also within the country between castes, economic, religious and cultural backgrounds. This study aims to understand how post-colonial theory and feminism intersect in understanding a multicultural and diverse country such as India. Throughout the research, the author discovered Desi feminism, which was originated in India and aims to further the idea of what feminism is in order incorporate intersectional feminism. Desi feminism proved to be an extremely interesting topic, which is worth exploring and illustrated this thesis. The movement criticizes the dominance of White female voices in the global dialogue surrounding, reminding feminists across the globe that *“while we are fighting for the same things, the predominant white feminist narrative does not give voice to the unique challenges and compounded suppression that women of color face”* (Sara Hussain, 2017).

A framework for the theorization and research for future practice in postcolonial contexts is suggested at the end of the thesis, based on the research findings and leading the way to a more inclusive research practice that allows the space for subaltern feminist

perspectives. This thesis sets a future-forward agenda for theory, research and practice in the field of feminism in postcolonial context across the globe, therefore presenting numerous suggestions for further study.

Keywords: Critical Feminism, Decolonial Feminist Praxis, Intersectional Feminism, Postcolonial Theory, Postcolonial Feminism, India.

List of figures.

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1: A protestor at FEMEN’s ‘International Topless Jihad Day’. VERVE Team (global collective of intersectional feminists)..... | 18 |
| Figure 2: The Research Onion (Saunders et al., 2000). | 38 |
| Figure 3: Inductive and deductive Research Process..... | 40 |
| Figure 4: Case Study Research Process, illustration based on Yin, 2014, p.1 | 41 |
| Figure 5: age of the participants. | 49 |
| Figure 6: occupation of the participants..... | 50 |
| Figure 7: religion of the participants..... | 50 |
| Figure 8: Positive remarks on the influence of the West on feminism in India. | 51 |
| Figure 9: Main themes mentioned when answering the question: "What does feminism mean to you?" | 54 |

List of abbreviations.

CSSS - Center for the Study of Social Systems

FEMEN – Ukrainian feminist group, from the Ukrainian word ‘Фемєн’.

IMRB – India’s Market Research Bureau

LGBTQIA+ - Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transexual Queer Intersex Asexual and more.

SRI International - formerly Stanford Research Institute

UAHC – Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano

UCLouvain – Université Catholique de Louvain

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

UNITAR – United Nations Institute for Training and Research

USA – United States of America

I. Introduction.

A. Background and case study selection.

Feminism is a set of movements and ideas aiming to promote, share, define and achieve equality for all. Numerous sociological, psychological or philosophical analyses, but also economic and political, have been derived from feminism through struggles on different levels. The first wave of feminism focused on the right to vote for women during the 19th and 20th centuries. The second wave in the 1960s, represented by the women's liberation movement, included cultural differences and gender norms in society in order to break away from the stereotypes attributed to the women's place in the world. The third wave, beginning in the 1990s, came from the faults and criticisms attributed to the second wave. It is notably at this time that the feminist movement divided. The perception of feminism by the different waves of the movement has been widely criticized by non-Western feminists: the "waves" of feminism are largely focused on the struggle of white Western women, a view of women's struggle that is seen as racist and colonialist (Cott, 1989). This division is linked to a sense of misunderstanding and misrepresentation by feminist movements developing particularly in Europe and the USA. The trajectory of wave-based understandings of feminism implies that there was no notion of women's liberation or struggle before this, that is, before white British and/or Western women fought for their rights (Manzoor-Khan, 2016). In this work, the term 'western feminism' will refer, as per Bulbeck's definition, to the work written by North-American women, by Australian and Neo-Zealander women and by European-descendant women (1998).

On the other hand, feminist movements in developing countries, and particularly in India, have been heavily criticized by Western feminist movements for focusing exclusively on the most privileged women in society, sidelining women belonging to lower castes. This criticism has led to the development of new feminist movements and organizations that are dependent on and representative of specific castes (Geetanjali, 2007). This study explores the complex and somewhat ambiguous collusion between the feminist thought and movement and postcolonial theory through a critical feminist perspective.

The case study choice for this research is the perspective of feminism by Indian women. The author of this research, having spent a few months in India in 2016, partly in the context of a short-term cultural exchange and partly backpacking and moving around different families, the author had the chance of meeting a lot of women from diverse backgrounds, and was

especially interested by their expectations of feminism, their understanding of what feminists want. As the author had the chance to discover various parts of the country, they were also confronted with the immense diversity of cultures, practices and thoughts present in this country. After some research, the author found an extensive literature on the decolonizing of the feminist thought in Latin America, but very little on India. Their experience in Chile for a semester also led them to share with feminist academists in the hosting university who developed their research along a decolonial feminist perspective. It led the author to wonder how this decolonial feminist paradigms applies to such a diverse country as India, which is too often left to the side in feminist academic research. Indeed, there is research on Black Feminism, on Latin-American decolonial perspectives, on Indigenous thoughts and practices through a Feminist lens, but there is not as much on Feminism centered on Asia, and here more specifically on India.

B. Statement of the research problem.

This study assumes that the perception of feminism in India is different from Western feminism, and constructed by their experiences and culture. The hypothesis developed here is that the feminism developed by Western women applies to Western women's cultures, and that the variety of culture in other countries, considered as 'third-world' countries, implies a variety of perspectives of feminism, a variety of needs and demands. As stated by Chilla Bulbeck, "*the agenda of contemporary western feminism focuses on equal participation in work and education, reproductive rights, and sexual freedom. But what does feminism mean to the women of rural India who work someone else's fields*" (Bulbeck, 1998, p. 19). This is exactly the question that led the author during this case study: **how is the feminist movement in India characterized and understood through the testimonies of women themselves?**

The author also asked herself all along the study the following questions: **how does post-colonial theory and feminism intersect in understanding a multicultural and diverse country such as India? Why do we need to understand feminism in India from a post-colonialist perspective?**

Here, the research aims to challenge the imaginative space that non-western women occupy in the minds of western academic feminists. This study draws on a critical feminist perspective analysis as a theoretical interest through testimonies collected through semi-structured interviews. The study will analyze how urban middle- and upper-class women in

India have constructed a feminist praxis based on their everyday experiences, in order to understand their conception of feminism. This study aims to understand how social and cultural factors construct the perception and identification of feminism in Indian society, basing itself on critical feminism, in order to provide a decolonial feminist framework for academic research on feminism in India. The researcher here attempts to understand feminism in India through a qualitative mixed-methods analysis of various data, including interviews, existing literature, Instagram feminist pages, Indian women's organizations websites. We will adopt an intersectional critical feminist approach in order to understand the specificities of the Indian feminist movement as well as to encourage an understanding of a decolonized feminism.

C. Methodological and contextual issues.

The context in which this study was realized is worth being mentioned, and will be developed further in the research limitations. The study was realized while the student was on an exchange mobility in Santiago, Chile, during which it faced the consequences on the distance with the UCLouvain as well as with the access of information, but also a global strike at the university which led to the closing of all access to classes. This strike was part of a unique social setting in a country that is currently rewriting its whole constitution. I believe these were important elements that affected my perception, my efficiency and the general researcher bias.

This thesis was indeed written in a unique setting. The researcher was on an exchange mobility in Chile. The university chosen for the mobility is a leading university in critical studies and critical research in Chile, the Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, which brought additional possibilities of understanding the general concepts. The university offers to all students a compulsory course on Human Rights, Gender and Multiculturalism. Chilean feminist, and more generally Latin American feminists, are also known to have fueled the decolonial feminists research and movements, as much of the literature used in this study proves it. Chile is currently the place of huge social and political reforms: the country is rewriting its whole constitution. Since October 2019, the Chilean streets were taken by large demonstrations demanding unprecedented changes of political processes, known as the 'Estallido Social', rattling the political scene in Chile and leaving the country extremely unstable. An amendment to the constitution allowed for the election of the youngest president of the world in 2021, Gabriel Boric, who is not part of the alliance between the two parties

that have governed the country since the end of the dictatorship, driving a significant change in Chile. The current constitution, which was imposed by the civil-military dictatorship in 1980, is therefore being rewritten during the next two years. The election of the new president did not however end the social unrest, as citizens across the country are protesting to make sure their rights are included in the new constitution, especially students who have been and are the leaders of the social and political revolution. In this context, the university in which the student was on exchange was taken by the students, demanding a series of reforms (see annex 1). This context made it extremely difficult for the student, as we had no access to the teachers, the classes or the university and there was no information as to what would happen next. All classes were canceled and student meetings were held every second day to review the demands that were to be given to the university in order to find an agreement. However, this context was also very interesting, as the demands in the students in the university but also across Chile took a huge inspiration on developing a decolonial perspective of Chilean research, teaching and academics, including in the teaching of feminist values based on Latin American research.

In addition to this, being in Chile while writing this thesis was in some ways a challenge in regards to the access of resources. International deliveries were proven to be extremely unreliable, as two books that were ordered were never delivered. The access of the library of the hosting university was useful in some ways, but required a huge amount of time to find the literature as everything was organized through paper records. Luckily, having completed a master with UNITAR two years ago, I still had access to the online library which was rich in international literature. The electronic bibliographical resources of the UCLouvain were equally valuable and proved the importance of the availability of electronic resources for students.

More than contextual limitations of the research itself, when analyzing the collusion between postcolonial studies discourse and feminist discourses, we must raise the question: how can we ethically narrate the story of the 'Oriental Woman', the 'Third-World Woman', without speaking for them, without condemning them to an archetype such as the docile subordinate wife or the revengeful and strong Goddess? (Castaing, 2014). Another question is raised by Castaing: "*how can one emancipate feminism from monolithic thought that is euro-centered?*" (2014). Having previously traveled around India for a few months, as stated previously, I was profoundly impacted by how much I learned from this experience. I was brought in front of complex worldviews, challenging lived experiences that were drastically

different from the perspectives I had, alternative ways of working, organizing and living in community. My previous worldviews were built upon an ontology of modernity that did not adequately recognize the work, lives and knowledge of 'others'. Through living in other communities across the world and traveling for a few years, during which I mainly stayed with the locals, I was able to challenge these previous worldviews and it opened my mind to a lot of questions regarding how, in academic research especially, we construct our knowledge of the so called 'other'. The feminist approach adopted when attempting to understand feminism in India must therefore be taken from a postcolonialism stance and consider cultural specificities. The subjectivity of postcolonial theories was to be taken into account, as the perspective that is chosen when analyzing an issue through the postcolonial lenses has the ability to change the whole dynamic. Each perspective can illustrate a partial aspect of the systemic modes of domination, overlapping cultural identities as was explained through critical feminism, as well as contemporary international relations. The understanding of what 'post-colonial' is must be interrogated and contextualized historically, geopolitically, and culturally (Shohat, 1992).

In academic literature, we are often confronted with the problem of how to analyse a culture, an experience, a story that we cannot relate to. Yet, it often happens that western academist analyse feminism from a 'white-saviour' perspective. Therefore, an important point to raise and that was taken into strict account all along the research is the fact that this research was conducted by a white European woman. Criticizing the colonialist perspective generally developed by white European feminist academists was therefore quite controversial, and the use of critical feminist theory was extremely important. The researcher is aware and stayed as aware as possible all along the process of the subjectivity of their own perception, and attempted as much as possible to provide herself a space of self-criticism and self-reflection on this subject as well. The help throughout the research and criticism offered by non-white feminists and decolonial feminists was precious in avoiding as much as possible for this work to be yet another white feminist academist perspective over other cultures. A few precautions were taken in order to balance the researcher bias and the influence of the perspective chosen on the research. The author has decided to ask the help of members of an afro-feminist anti-capitalist and decolonialist group aiming at the collective resolution of difficulties generally faced by people of color in the city of Brussels and beyond. The author has also asked a woman they have met a few years ago from India, still living in India, to read over the interview questions, the general research and the interview transcripts in order to provide yet

another point of view from someone who is affected by the matter at stake. Therefore, various people will be reading the writings and the research of the author throughout the whole process in order to give review and to provide critics on the position taken by the author as a white academicist. Although having taken all these precautions, it seems inevitable that the western-feminist ideas will be taken along in the subjectivity of the research towards other cultures, but the goal is also to bring back to new questions and understandings of feminism from diverse cultures.

Another limitation during the study was related to the use of the term 'Western Feminism' as a generalization for white feminist discourse. Indeed, a study by Gisela Kaplan showed the heterogeneity of western feminisms, dividing them into four main groups: the Scandinavian progressive North, the conservative center, the creative traditionalism of western Europe which would comprise France and the Netherlands, the radical southern Europe which would refer to Portugal, Italy and Spain) (Kaplan, 1992, p. 21). It is therefore important to note the differences in these feminisms as well, as there are differences in languages: indeed, it is rather the English-speaking white feminism that has been dominating world feminism. Bulbeck argues that European feminism has had little influence on feminist theory, referring to the research led by Holub (1994, p. 239). However, while this research recognizes the heterogeneity of western feminisms, it also claims their cooperation in dominating world feminisms over non-western approaches.

The author here is not attempting to give a general understanding of all the perspectives of domination related to feminism, nor to understand feminism in ex-colonized countries, but rather to give an idea of the need to further question the understanding of feminism according to various lenses. The goal here is therefore to give women the opportunity to speak for themselves. In the academic field in general, the predominance of white, Western, masculine, heteronormative, and (post)positivist norms in the past and still today creates challenges for women of color who engage in scholarship that reflects feminist and cultural values. The author does not undermine the complications that can come out of this kind of study, such as the strong researcher bias that must be taken into account and stated here, but also the feasibility of accurately represent somewhat of an understanding of what feminism means to other individuals. In this research, it is also extremely important to avoid all kinds of generalization, as one individual's experience and perception does not and cannot automatically or exactly represent that of another. When conducting any study, but especially in this context, the researcher must be open to learn, to deconstruct, to welcome new

knowledge and ideas with humility. We must be transparent and reflexive about the subjective and impact that who we are, our experience as an individual, has on the analysis and on the global research (Gilgun, 2008; Probst, 2015).

Additionally, it is important to point out that this research is not aimed at understanding ‘them’, but rather at questioning ‘us’ and our perception. In the light of the notion of ‘decolonizing’, this research is not aimed at helping Indian women understand what feminism is to them, as they already have their own perception and understandings and do not need a European researcher on the matter to give them insight on something that is intrinsically theirs. Rather, the aim of this work is for the researchers, scholar, students, and teachers based in those universities in what is commonly called ‘western’ countries, the UK, the USA, Europe, to question their understanding of feminism as a general ideological value to be shared through various cultures through the perception of women in India. This entails the need for a critical questioning of the very power relations in which we are embedded and the often-privileged positions from which we are given the possibility to express ourselves, to speak and write.

II. Conceptual and theoretical framework.

This chapter attempts to enhance our understanding of knowledge, here being one that goes beyond the individual and navigates through borders. This chapter aims at developing the conceptual and theoretical framework which will give way to the analysis of the data and be the base throughout the whole research process.

A. Post-colonial feminism, decolonial feminism and third-world feminism.

The narrative of the different waves of feminism sets aside the history and experiences of non-white and marginalized people. This narrative is part of an understanding of the world under a colonialist perspective. Indeed, colonialism justified the violent invasion of southern countries by the need to intervene in order to help them restructure their society and their institutions, using the justification that these countries were incapable of governing themselves (Manzoor-Khan, 2016). The suffragette movement for example that advocated the right to vote largely put aside the rights of black women, using as one of the arguments to obtain the right to vote the idea that white women were more civilized than black men.

Women's rights activists such as Elizabeth Candy Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Mary Wollstonecraft, Betty Friedan and even Ruth Bader Ginsburg are now recognized as having been deeply racist in their fight for the rights of only white women. This idea was also motivated by the view of non-western men as harsh patriarchs and irrational savages only motivated by sexual interests. Western men, on the other hand, were seen as educated, knowing the rules of proper conduct. Following this logic, only Western countries could provide assistance for the liberation of women in non-Western countries (Manzoor-Khan, 2016).

This traditional feminist narrative, pretending to represent the challenges facing women, as if all women belonged to one and only one identity group and shared the same experience with domination and oppression, can also be called "whitestream" feminism according to Grande (2003). This term was coined by Claude Denis (1997), adapted from the term "malestream", in order to represent the idea that even if society is not white in demographic terms, it is structured mainly around the idea of being white. Whitestream feminism was notably criticized by Jacqui Alexander and Gloria Anzaldúa who noted that what they "*would later understand to be white, upper- middle-class, hetero-hegemonic feminism*" (aka "*whitestream feminism*") *just didn't do it for us*" (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983).

According to Grande (2003), "*well-documented failures to engage race and acknowledge the complicity of white women in the history of domination, positions 'mainstream' feminism alongside other colonialist discourse*". Women from minorities or non-Western countries do not need to be saved from heteropatriarchy or hetero-paternalism within their own communities: they have already started the process of decolonization a long time ago and through their own resources, adapted to their culture and their environment (Arvin et al., 2013). Women's rights have even been misused by the West to justify military intervention, using feminist language and the feminist cause in order to sell their agenda and obtain consensus on the need for intervention (International Association for Political Science students, 2021). When Bush decided to intervene in Afghanistan in order to save the Muslim women being oppressed, mainstream feminists praised him and there was even a petition by the liberal group Feminist Majority thanking the Bush administration (Schulte, 2001).

This model of feminism that sets aside other forms of oppression is still the most represented today, where overseas interventions are seen as the only way to liberate non-white women but also LGBTQIA+ people (Manzoor-Khan, 2016). This model of feminism is largely based

on the so-called ‘white-savior complex’, which refers to a white person, whether in real-life or fictional character, who feels the need and responsibility to ‘save’ a person of color from their oppression, without fully understanding or taking into account the complex mechanisms of power and oppressions. This is also present in other feminist practices such as women protesting the wearing of the hijab in all contexts without taking into account the choice and decision of those who are concerned, as with the FEMEN’s ‘International Topless Jihad Day’. This statement is quite problematic as it represents an essentialist view of what feminism is.



FIGURE 1: A PROTESTOR AT FEMEN’S ‘INTERNATIONAL TOPLESS JIHAD DAY’. VERVE TEAM (GLOBAL COLLECTIVE OF INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISTS).

Another example of this is the protesting of homophobic behaviours in other countries and cultures without taking into account the homophobia that we have in our own countries.

This ideology seems to forget that 'women' are not a unit, a universal category, opposed to a unit that would then be men. These women moreover, taken as examples to represent all women, are white, middle class, heterosexual, cis and able-bodied women: they do not represent all the challenges and oppressions that manifest themselves in different societies across the globe. It is therefore not accurate today to speak of only one feminism,

that explores the lives of dominantly white women, but rather to speak of feminisms. These different branches focus on the experience of women in the so called “third-world” and “were brought into being when women from around the world began to critique the limitations of the sort of universal feminism that come from the white bourgeois women in the West to explain our own realities” (Pillar Villanueva, 2019). The model was highly criticized, and Black feminists, such as Angela Davis, were critical of this Western Feminism due to its ethnocentrism.

Building on the concepts of intersectional feminism and standpoint feminism, that we explore later in this chapter, postcolonial and decolonial feminism emerged as a reaction to the feminism focused solely on the western women experience. There are two epistemological maps that explain the development of decolonial feminism (Ballestrin, 2016). Nadjie Al-Ali, a feminist writer, defines postcolonial feminism as “*characterized by a series of transitions, a multiplicity of processes and developments towards decolonisation and de-centering of the ‘West’*”. The first epistemological explanation of decolonial feminism originates in the 1980s, following the development of decolonial theories, many of the scholars at the root of the decolonial discourse have broadened the issue to feminism, representing the first interactions between feminism and post coloniality. As a prominent example, Sylvia Wynter criticizes feminism from an anticolonialist perspective in 1990 (Wynter, 1990). The theory also stands in response to an early post-colonial theory dominated and developed by men, the early proponents of most of the research on the post-colonial. These men were mostly occupied with the issues of rebuilding the nation after empire and colonialism had destroyed indigenous people’s history (Al-wazedi, 2020).

The second epistemological explanation took place in 1998 with the foundation of the small group of researchers called Modernity/Coloniality, which introduced the concept of the ‘Decolonial Turn’ as an attempt to insert Latin America in the global post-colonialist debate. It refers to the repositioning of power, subjectivity, and resistance beyond modernity/coloniality, according to Nelson Maldonado-Torres.

This group acknowledged that coloniality is the logic and the rationality at the base of colonialism, that this said coloniality is at the base of modernity and that decoloniality should always question modernity. It was the Argentinian scholar María Lugones, member of the group, that first began to actually use the term “decolonial feminism”, in “*Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System*” (Lugones 2007). According to Lugones (2007), the

feminist struggle must include a fight against coloniality, which does not only refer to the historical legacies of colonialism but also to the effects of the power relationships on a world scale still nowadays, where in the project of modernity, colonialism, capitalism, and western globalization were an inseparable triad. She was the first to amplify the discourse and broaden the theory by including gender in an intersectional analysis of decoloniality (Lugones, 2008). However, the ideas developed by the group present a problematic absence of discussion on gender: as stated by Lugones, the binary system of gender was imposed by the coloniality of power and therefore is not central to the study of the postcolonial (Lugones, 2008, 2010). In these times was also developed the concept of ‘**Declension Narratives**’ relating to feminism by Bulbeck, which argues that colonized women had status and power which was lost under the white patriarchal rule of colonialism, such as for example the ancient matriarchies.

Postcolonial feminism allows to adopt a critical perspective, addressing inequalities related to hegemonic power-relations through the thorough examination of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, as well as critiquing postcolonial gender roles (Al-wazedi, 2020). Postcolonial feminism offers the perception of hegemonic feminism (Spivak, 1985) through the critical gaze of postcolonial theories, a feminist perspective that includes gender relations in their historically and geographically colonized and racialized dimension (Dechaufour, L., 2008). Women, who in this study represent anyone who considers themselves and identifies as a woman, including transsexual women, and all those that fall on a spectrum that does not fit the gender binarity that is often assumed, are all different from one another and are each endowed, whether individually or collectively, with their own unique experiences that have constructed their perceptions of reality. This study therefore takes a perspective which is rooted in intersectionality. In addition to a focus of patriarchy as a source of oppression, it explores how social inequalities are constructed by a political, historical, cultural, and economic context (Mohanty et al. 1991, Quayson 2000). Mohanty brings a feminist perspective in her decolonial theory development by calling in feminism for the development of equitable basic principles, those being “*economic stability, racial equality and the racial redistribution of wealth*” (Mohanty, 2003, p.4). The post-colonial perspective of feminist theory criticizes the colonial power on one part, but also denounces the hegemonic power established by indigenous men after the Empires fell apart (Al-wazedi, 2020).

The new ideas of the last century on decolonial feminist perspectives are however quite different from the initial epistemological development explained above. The subaltern feminisms have shined light on the divisions and conflicts within feminisms and have allowed for innovative experiences depatriarchalizing the state power across the world. The concepts of postcolonial theory and decolonial theory were built upon the collective political practices and activism by Abya Yala women, a decolonial term that refers to Latin America, the Caribbean region and black women, along with the work of critical feminists, but also upon the decolonial theory that was built by Latin American thinkers. The term Abya Yala is from Kuna language and translates to “earth alive” or “ripen earth”, used as an alternative to the term Latin America known for its colonial and racial legacy.

As stated in the Instagram account @feminisminindia, decolonial feminists also criticize the emergence of ecofeminism as it once again positions women in the global south as helpless and vulnerable therefore needing the need for upper-class White feminists to take action and save them with their knowledge and theories constructed in the West. Additionally, this movement is criticized for putting the pressure on women and ridding the responsibility of men due to the supposed relationship between women and nature. The ecofeminist movement, driven by Vandana Shive in India, is also criticized for being ignorant to issues of caste and hierarchies within tribal communities as well as generalizing the experience of women across the world.

Decolonial feminism captures the practice of political projects taking place in the global south. However, the term cannot capture the diversity of struggles between regions and rather should be taken as a reference to a feminist revolution including the variety subtle nuances according to all the different and local experiences.

B. Critical Feminism.

Critical feminism combines the ideas of feminism and critical theories. The goal of critical theories is to “*identify prevailing structures and practices that create or uphold disadvantage, inequity, or oppression, and to point the way toward alternatives that remote more egalitarian relationships, groups, and societies*” (L. Baxter and Braithwaite 2008, 292). The combination of the two theories therefore leads to the perception of the relationship between cultural structures and practices that influence inequitably people, and especially women’s, lives and communication practices. This leads to the assumption that members of groups defined by sex, race, and other factors occupy distinct positions in a society.

The use of the word ‘critical’ here needs to be taken into a broader sense that allows to differentiate from other types of feminism that have been highly influenced by neoliberalism and often function to reinforce rather than challenge the status quo, especially white or western feminism. The use of this theory provides an essential mean to understand and critique inequality and power structures viewed through critical lenses in relation with privilege and inequality. The theory raises the need for increased communication regarding women’s issues in society in order to increase general awareness.

In ‘Critical Feminisms: Principles and Practices for Feminist Inquiry in Social Work’, the authors have developed the concept surrounding three main axes: conceptual, epistemological and political (Goodkind et al., 2021). The approach developed in their work is the one adopted in the study, as it views critical feminism through various lenses. The conceptual lens allows to interrogate the categories commonly used to view and understand the world, extending further from the binary towards a more holistic worldview. Critical theories allow to “expand from legal or national boundaries towards global interconnectedness, recognizing interdependence, and urge us to embrace each other and the complexities of our world Goodkind et al., 2021). The authors also point out that the use of the theory also moves away from western-dominated worldview based on individualism in order to recognize the relationships and interconnections between individuals, societies, communities. Another goal of the theory is to emphasize praxis, which understand theory and practice as inextricably linked (Goodkind et al., 2021). The authors state that “*our theories about how the world works, whether articulated or not, undergird our actions; therefore, being intentional about the theories on which we base our practice is important*”, and this approach is a core element of this research study (Goodkind et al., 2021). The knowledge developed in this study has as an aim the invitation for an alternative perception and study of feminism in non-western countries.

The epistemological explanation developed by Goodkind et al. equally define the purpose of this research through the questioning of traditional academic production of knowledge. Indeed, critical feminism allows a questioning of the existing knowledge, of assumptions made, in the case of this study, about what feminism means for other people, in order to open possibilities for reframing and deconstructing our perceptions. Adopting a critical feminist stance leads us to “challenge positivism by recognizing partiality of perspective, importance of positionality, and necessity of reflexivity” (Goodkind et al., 2021). This importance of partiality has been notably advocated by Collins in 1986 in ‘Learning from the Outsider

Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought’, as well as by Haraway, in 1988 in ‘Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective’. Critical feminism aims to give space to those who have been excluded for so long from the conversation: the marginalized, the minorities, the dissidents.

The use of critical feminist theory reinforces the need to be political in a context where individual and structural change are interlinked and interdependent. As mentioned by Marion Young, the structural change is needed as our society’s relation to power and oppression is not only linked to violence and domination but also by the “everyday practices of well-intentioned liberal society” (1990, p. 41). Not being into politics is largely considered a privilege, a way to avoid having to face societal problems.

C. Post (-) colonial theory, decoloniality and decolonizing.

Post-colonial theory emerged with the publication of the Palestinian-American critic Edward Said’s book, *Orientalism* (1978) and was first called ‘colonial discourse analysis’. The pervasive tradition of Western literature, art and culture fetishize is brought forward in Said’s theory of orientalism, which has been deeply criticized. His book stereotype representations of Eastern cultures and people, and centers all perspectives on the Western experience to the extent that people who are not white and western are, by default, ‘other’. Post-colonial studies focus on the analysis of the political, economic, social, cultural, and historical impact of European colonialism as registered through texts such as literature, hence in the discourse (Tsang,2021). According to post-colonial studies, the process of decolonization begins with the understanding that the collective oppression of racialized people is a direct result of colonization, reinforced by Western Christianity, white supremacy and capitalism (Grande, 2003). However, Ella Shohat in *Notes on the ‘post-colonial’*, criticizes the term ‘post-colonial’ as it “*carries with it the implication that colonialism is now a matter of the past, undermining colonialism's economic, political, and cultural deformative-traces in the present*” (1992). The term lacks to take into account the contemporary power relations that are rooted in colonialism. As time went by, post-colonial scholars have observed that the structures of oppression, dominance and exploitation were perpetrated even after independence, and still nowadays. Indeed, postcolonial theory also implies the existence of neo-colonialism which refers to the use of economic, culture and political tools to pressure and control other countries. The prefix ‘post’ in post-colonialism is then understood as a marker of the ongoing effect of colonialism on a former colony after its independence rather

than a temporal marker as it can be commonly understood (Tsang, 2021): “*the prefix "post" would make sense less as "after" than as following, going beyond and commenting upon a certain intellectual movement - third worldist anti-colonial critique - rather than beyond a certain point in history – colonialism*” (Shohat, 1992). In order to illustrate this understanding of the prefix ‘post’, scholars have used the term ‘postcolonial’ without the hyphen. The idea is that the term ‘post-colonial’ means the time period after a colony has gained independence, but the unhyphenated version ‘postcolonial’ refers to the more complex understanding of the post-independence period as being continuously affected by structures and institutions imposed during the colonial era (Tsang, 2021). This study will therefore use the term ‘postcolonial’ in this way.

Another important concept in this study is the concept of decoloniality, which emerged from South American authors who were mainly concerned about European colonization of American lands by Spanish and Portuguese empires. The first authors who brought decoloniality as a school of thought were Anibal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo, Ramón Grosfoguel and María Lugones, who offered decoloniality as a school of thought that overcomes postcolonialism. They questioned the relationship between coloniality and modern rationality. Decoloniality is seen more as an epistemological perception than a political project, as compared to ‘decolonization’ which was in fact more of a political project in the 20th century aiming at putting native people back at the control of the state (Mignolo, ...). The authors argue that colonialism and modernity cannot be separated. The concept of the ‘coloniality of power’ was first developed by Quijano and then later further developed by Mignolo. It refers to understanding the ideological Eurocentric hegemony in social sciences as a colonial attitude producing knowledge, as well as how domination logics are intrinsically connected with global capitalism. For Anibal Quijano, coloniality is one of the constitutive and specific elements of the world pattern of capitalist power, and the coloniality of power is located in the colonial period of Latin America. According to Quijano, race has a structural connection to labor and is at the base of a globalist and capitalist economy. The way Quijano thinks of gender also leads to a broader understanding of postcolonial theory in feminism, stating that “it is possible (...) that the idea of gender was elaborated after the new and radical dualism as part of Eurocentric cognitive approach” (Quijano, . We can therefore understand that modernity, rather than being a step further away from coloniality, depends on the later to reproduce. We therefore seek to understand the relationship between the colonial condition and the imposition of a Western logic of ‘modernity’ as a consequence of colonialism (Tsang,

2021): to do so, Walter D. Mignolo in his book *On Decoloniality*, presents the concept as a ‘praxis’ of ‘undoing and redoing’ (Walsh and Mignolo 2018, p. 120).

Although the concepts of ‘postcolonial’ and ‘decoloniality’ present various differences, we must see them as two perspectives that can be adopted, as both are concerned with the way the West has imposed a ‘universal’ model of ‘modernity’ on other parts of the world through imperial invasion and colonial governance (Bhabra, 2014). In sight of these divergences, the author believes it is of more use to admit that both of these concepts have evolved and that the debates between the two can be fruitful as tools of study, finding common grounds to work on. In 2006, Mignolo and Tlostanova argue that that ‘postcolonial’ largely remains within the dichotomy of the subject/object that usually typifies research of much of the social sciences and humanities. The ‘decolonial’ is however concerned with what they call the corpolitics and geopolitics of knowledge.

In opposition with the other two theoretical concepts of decolonial feminism and critical feminism, which mainly provide an epistemological frame for research, the word ‘decolonizing’ used in the title of this study suggests action. Here, the focus does not solely lie on decolonising the colonies, but in pushing to decolonise ‘ourselves’ as students, researchers, scholars, and teachers based in higher education institutions in countries representing former colonial empire of the UK, the US, or Euro-America (the West). The author here places herself in the aim to act, to decolonize our own perception from an outside point of view and take into account other perspectives. As argued by Ramona Beltrán and Gita Mehrotra in “Honoring Our Intellectual Ancestors: A Feminist of Color Treaty for Creating Allied Collaboration” (2015), we must remember that there are important traditions outside of the ‘mainstream’ ones that can guide us to epistemic justice.

Within the concept of ‘coloniality of power’, the space that is hosting the power dynamics is the body of domination and exploitation, and are put in practice within the limits of gender relations (Essoussi, 2019). This is illustrated in concepts such as sexual liberation, prostitution, traditional family organisation, racial division, etc. (Curiel, 2007).

D. Intersectional feminism and standpoint feminism.

Understanding the concept of intersectional feminism is equally important as Intersectionality is a key tool in postcolonial and decolonial theories. Indeed, it apprehends the different forms of equality (such as racism, unpaid domestic duties, domestic violence)

while looking at it through numerous lenses. The term intersectional feminism emerged in 1991, theorized by law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw. She defines the theory as “*a prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other*” (Steinmetz, 2020). Intersectional feminism is, according to McCall (1991), the most important contribution feminist studies have made to date. This theory recognizes that patriarchy does not work alone to oppress women. Indeed, other integrated systems in our society add to the oppression of minorities, including women, such as capitalism or white supremacy (Manzoor-Khan, 2016). It is therefore appropriate that people who experience oppressions from multiple oppressive systems consecutively, stacking up with each other, form a perception and experience of power that is unique to them. Indeed, although feminists are fighting for common values such as equality, “*South Asian (or desi) women face discrimination not only because of our gender, but also on account of our culture and society, both at home and in the global arena*” (Sara Hussain, 2017). Desi is a term that refers to the people, cultures, and products of the Indian subcontinent and their diaspora.

Intersectional feminism aims to provide a framework for analysing power and the different research notions that encompass issues such as sexism, racism, class oppression, heterosexism as well as other axes of oppression in their complex interconnections (Allen, 2011). This approach helps conceptualize the relationship between systems of oppression, which construct our multiple identities and our perception of the world, as well as our social positions in hierarchies of power and privilege (Carastathis, 2014).

The lack of inclusion of different oppressions is also visible even within non-Western countries, where women of different socioeconomic levels in an extremely divided society are not represented by the traditional feminist movement. This is the case through the caste system in India which increases inequalities even among women. Women from marginalized communities have often criticized the dominant feminist movement in India (Nair Rashmi, 2020). Marginalized feminists in India have expressed the need for an intersectional feminist approach within Indian society in order to take into account their perspective and needs in the face of the inequality and oppression of everyday life (Nair Rashmi, 2020). Mainstream feminism rejects the need to integrate caste divisions among women in feminist studies (Sandhya Nare Pawar, 2016). The demands of marginalized women testify to the growing need for the so-called traditional Indian feminist movement to go far beyond its focus on gender as well as patriarchy to include issues such as caste and ethnicity in the feminist agenda (Nair Rasmi, 2020).

Adopting an intersectional perspective also means recognizing the historical contexts that encompass a problem. Moreover, from the perception of feminist theory which adopts the construction of a reality through the oppressions experienced by the marginalized people of society, this study argues that the theories of standpoint feminism and intersectional feminism fit into a constructivist approach. Indeed, as noted by Caractathis (2014), “*It has become commonplace within feminist theory to claim that women's lives are constructed by multiple, intersecting systems of oppression*”. Such an approach recognizes the diversity of women's experiences in India and can help build a diverse and inclusive feminist movement (Nair Rashmi, 2020).

Intersectional feminism, but also intersectionality on other levels, is now an embedded concept in academic research. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has recognized the importance of examining the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination in its Resolution on the rights of women (2002). This study adopts a point of view rooted in intersectional feminism that takes into account the challenges of marginalized people whether it is on the basis of their belonging to a certain gender, their sexual, racial, class identities or other reasons that push these people to be in some way marginalized from society.

The choice of intersectional feminism as a base for the theoretical framework for this research allows simultaneity, complexity, irreducibility and inclusiveness (Carastathis, 2014). It is important to understand the ways in which women of colour and of other socio-economic level, but also trans women in nowadays fight, have been and are often excluded from the narrative. Given that “*a real-life person is not, for example, a woman on Monday, a member of the working class on Tuesday, and a woman of African descent on Wednesday*’, *intersectionality responds to the' theoretical demand [...] to read these categories simultaneously*” (Russell, 2007, p. 47).

The feminist standpoint theory was developed in the 1970s. This theory argues that the feminist social sciences should be seen and studied through the perception of women or certain groups of women. The theory argues that women, as well as other non-dominant groups, are situated differently from men, and other dominant groups. This difference allows them a different view and interpretation of the world. Dorothy Edith Smith is recognized as the primary author on the development of standpoint feminism. Smith (1987) finds that the methods and theories developed in the field of social sciences were developed by men,

putting, perhaps and according to her, involuntarily, women and their perception of the world aside.

Smart (2009, p.296) observed that feminist critiques were based on the belief that sociology should better represent the lives of ordinary women. The empirical tradition of feminism criticizes the epistemological position of men by questioning the so-called objectivity of their perception of the world (MacKinnon, 1982, p.23). A feminist epistemology, or taken from standpoint feminism, proposes to take the experience of women as the point of departure in addition to, and sometimes even instead of, the experience of men.

Smith (1987), however, focuses on an individual constructed reality, applicable to the middle-class white woman, but does not take into account the existence of collective values and oppressions other than being a woman that encompasses a collective experience, thus creating a perception of reality that is common for all members of a certain group. Collins (2000), moreover explores the feminist standpoint theory by applying it to the black women of certain American districts, thus taking again the ideas developed previously in this work. The collective values shared by these women, their culture, their experiences in the face of racism, but also their shared history of the experience of segregation, created a standpoint feminism which was specific to black women (Collins, 2000, p. 292). She concludes that the experiences of marginalized and oppressed people shape their perception of the world which is then different, but as valid.

Here, we seek to move away from heteropatriarchy, that is, the social and structural system in which heterosexuality and patriarchy are seen as norms of society. Heteropatriarchy suggests that all other configurations are perceived as abnormal, aberrant and repulsive (Arvin et al., 2013). Standpoint feminism, as adopted in this study, also rejects hetero-paternalism, which assumes that the heteropatriarchal domestic disposition, where the father is seen as both the center and the head of the family, should serve as a model for the social arrangements of the family, of the state and of its institutions (Arvin et al., 2013). These terms are both based on predefined notions separating men from women as two distinct categories. In India, the cultural context makes these norms extremely entrenched in modern Indian society, even though the country has a long tradition of women who have resisted conformism even under strong societal pressure (Sanchari, 2016). As India is an extremely multicultural, but also very divided country, there are many different perceptions of what feminism is. These stories of feminism are as multicultural and diverse as India itself

(Sanchari, 2016). Many women from marginalized groups have called for openness to a feminist perspective that incorporates into its values the idea that their gender and their caste or ethnic identity are both equally important in shaping their experiences (Nair R., 2020).

The use of standpoint theory here helps to analyze the perception of feminism which is specific to women coming from different social-economic levels in India. The dominant feminist movement, also called 'traditional' in India, remains focused on issues of gender and patriarchy and is based on the perspective of the most privileged women in society (Nair, R., 2020). This feminist movement ignores the differences arising from intersecting social identities such as caste, ethnicity, religion and class within the Indian women's community (Nair R., 2020).

E. Equality, equity and privilege.

To break away from this colonialist feminist model, it is necessary to reconsider what equality means. Equality is also a concept defined by the colonialist past of the feminist movement. In the eyes of some feminist movements, equality represents access to the same things as men. The view of power in traditional feminism suggests a unique balance with men on one side and women on the other (Manzoor-Khan, 2016). However, when the different oppressions intersect, we see that a racialized man will occupy a different place of power than a white woman: one exercises patriarchal power over the other while the second exercises power through the privilege of being white. The hypocrisy of the so-called traditional feminist is recalled by Manzoor-Khan (2016), with the example of a board of directors celebrated for its gender diversity while every board member is white.

The history of systematic violence, oppression and discrimination has created deeply rooted inequalities in the current international system, and adds disadvantages to certain groups from the start (UN Women, 2020). These inequalities are notably represented by poverty, racism, sexism, but also the caste system in India. Perceptions of feminism are therefore not only varied according to the geographical and cultural context between different regions of the world, but also within the same region between people of different social-economic levels or between people of colour and white people. This also applies to women from ethnic groups in certain regions who suffer not only from the oppressions of the patriarchy, but also from violence linked to their identity. The impact of these inequalities extends across generations. This study sees the study of a sociological and oppressive phenomenon as necessary from an intersectional angle that does not set aside some oppressions over others. Manzoor-Khan

(2016), notes that “this conundrum of inequality leads to the fact that perhaps equality isn’t what we should strive for but justice - and justice comes only through liberation from unjust oppressive structures which are interlinked”.

It is also important to recognize and understand the notion of privilege. Privilege represents unearned benefits simply based on membership in a certain group. Membership in these dominant groups have more access to resources than members of other socially excluded groups (Nair R., 2020). A study in the United States showed that when white women became aware of their privileges, it improved their engagement in various feminist organizations (Greenwood, 2008).

In India, inequalities are deeply rooted in society and reinforced by the caste system. The Dalits, also called the ‘untouchables’, are the lower caste of Indian society: they suffer from a lot of discrimination and oppression. Dalit women, within their very society, bear the burden of caste, class and gender all together (Ruth Manorama, 2018). It is important that privileged women from upper castes not only include in their struggles the challenges of women from the most marginalized communities, but also avoid pretending to suffer more than women with disadvantaged multiple identities (Nair Rashmi, 2020).

III. Gap in literature.

A. The contributions of Native feminism, Black Feminism and Latin American feminism

Chandra Mohanty, an Indian-American sociologist and scholar, already in 1968, published an article titled ‘*Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*’, which denounced the fact that feminist studies and feminism colonized the lives of women in so-called ‘third world’ countries. Arvin, Eve Tuck and Angie Morrill (2013) explored the complex connections between colonialism and heteropatriarchy. The authors stated that “centering settler colonialism within gender and women's studies instead exposes the still-existing structure of settler colonialism and its powerful effects on Indigenous peoples and settlers” (2009, p. 9). Their analysis offers a perspective on indigenous or native perceptions of feminist theories, and a critique of ‘whitestream’ feminism, as defined as a feminist discourse that is not only dominated by privileged white women but also through the structuring of social classes (Grande, 2003). Lizabeth Paravisni-Gebert offers a perspective

on the decolonization of the feminist movement through the local roots of the women's movement in the Caribbean, as describe in her work called 'Daughters of Caliban: Caribbean Women in the Twentieth Century' that the "*realities we seek to understand as scholars are often much larger than the scholarship we pursue, and that the understanding we offer is at times just approximation, theory based on various fragments of a changing truth*" (1997). Thanks mainly to the development of Black Feminism, which were the first to realize and put to light the complexity of the oppressions they lived in their everyday life, but also to the work of social activists Abya Yala, decolonial feminism has more and more explored the needs, goals and political programs of women of the so-called "third world". Academics have been writing about the link between decoloniality and feminism, especially within the scholarly work of people from Latin America. Julieta Kirkwood, late feminist activist and founder of Gender Studies and the Women's movement in Chile, has brought forward new archives of women from Abya Yala which has helped to strengthen this feminist and political project. Another notable record of decolonial feminism would be the speech "Ain't I a women?" by Sojourner Truth for the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851. This speech marks the first expression which puts to light the power relations that exist between women. Indeed, Sojourner Truth's experience as a woman was evidently very different from that of a white woman at the time, as she had to fight against slavery and for her freedom as well as experiencing patriarchal domination.

Rosalva Aida Hernandez Castillo further examines how feminist research is complicit in silencing the different voices that do not subscribe to the discourse that rights and democracy are the only way to live a dignified life (2020, p. 38). While some authors explore the decolonization of the feminist movement, whether in the Caribbean, in black minority communities in the United States, or in indigenous populations, as well as in reflection of the Latin American context (Bendix et al., 2020), the perspective of a postcolonial feminism in India faces a gap in literature and academic research.

Although the existing literature on decolonial feminism in India is presented with a great gap, there are some major writers who dedicated much of their literary works on the correlations between post coloniality and gender. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic, is one of the most prominent writers on the post-colonial study of feminism in India. Spivak notably accused "bourgeois" Western feminists, or white feminist, of complicity with international capitalism in oppressing and exploiting women of the developing world. She worked notably in collaboration with the 'Subaltern

studies' group which was founded by scholars specializing in Indian and Southeast Asian societies, including Ranajit Guha. In her works, she questions capitalistic ideas and criticizes scholars such as Marx and Freud in their analysis of society that, according to Spivak, largely lacks an adequate inclusion of feminism. In her work 'A Critique of Postcolonial Reason', she criticizes the eurocentricism and ethnocentrism of academic research, developing the idea of 'sanctioned ignorance': western academics approve and encourage the ignorance regarding developing countries, that she calls the Subalterns (Spivak, 1985). This 'Sanctioned ignorance' leads to academics reproducing colonialist dynamics and structures in their research and analysis of the "third-world", usually done through a selective lens. However, this ignorance is correlated to something even broader, as stated by Lucy Mayblin: "broader than this is the abstraction of normative theory, originating in particular, colonial, cultural and historical contexts and then apparently unproblematically applied to all contexts" (Mayblin). This idea is central to this study, in a sense that the white feminists' ideas have been defined as a norm and then attentively applied to all other cultures. This colonialist lens purposely avoid the exact context in order to apply a normative perspective based on the Western experience in an institutionalized way.

Chilla Bulbeck, in 'Re-orienting Western Feminisms: Women's Diversity in a Postcolonial World', also offers a critic to the hegemony of white feminism and western feminism by exploring the lives of 'women of colour' (Bulbeck, 1998). She analyses the various debates on subjects such as human rights, family relationships, sexuality, and notions of the individual and community, offering a new understanding of their meaning and significance from diverse parts of the world. Her works contests the hegemony of feminism as being applied to all cultures and experiences. Her work is especially interesting as she offers to view how non-western women perceive western women rather than to analyse so called 'third-world' women directly. As Bulbeck's work aims to re-orient western feminism, her research is used as a main reference in this work which aims at developing on specific case study to this re-orientation. Her work is indeed also aimed at Western feminism in order to "*challenge the understandings of ourselves we get from feminists texts written for and by white western women*" (Bulbeck, 1998).

B. The case of India

Castaing (2014) writes on the ambiguity that comes from evaluating the social, familial, cultural, political, historical, and especially symbolic role of women in non-western

countries, more specifically in South Asia. Her trail of through is based on the work of Stéphanie Tawa Lama-Rewal (2004), who raises the question as to how we are meant to interpret the Indian patriarchy in a context where the familial and social subjugation of women stands in strong contrast to symbolic figures of domination, power, and anger, but also in contrast with major political and historical figures. In her work, she also identified and analyzed common analogies between the Indian female political figures and mythological figures, more particularly the Goddess Shakti who embodies the female power and has been used to justify the authoritarian use of power by Indira Gandhi. “*The omnipresence of women’s issues in South Asian political and historical discourses can nevertheless assume an attempt to ‘speak for’ women, and thus to reduce them to silence*” (Castaing, 2014). This idea was mostly developed by Spivak in the article ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1994 [1988]), who brings forwards ideas as to how the researcher can make sure that historically muted subject of the subaltern woman is heard. This suggests the need for a history from below referring to rereading the colonial and post-colonial history of India by highlighting the various daily forms of resistance but also by redefining what this feminist history refers to.

Maitrayee Chaudhuri is a teacher at the center for the study of social systems (CSSS) at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India since 1990. She has written on feminism, media, academia and pedagogy. Her key publications include *The Women’s Movement in India: Reform and Revival*, 1993, as well as *Feminism in India*, written in 2005. According to the peer review by Sanjukta Ghosh, the work of Chaudhuri challenges the reduction of local feminism, whereas the variety linked to the different cultures, geography and history are converged until these differences are lost, in order to reach the idea of one “third world feminism” which would be interchangeable with another. The idea behind this would be to put into one single model the multiple struggles and experiences lives by very different women across the world under very different conditions. S. Ghosh states that “*even in collections that forefront non-Western feminisms, the incredible range, complexities and contested nature of ‘feminisms’ within different national histories is reduced to a singular unitary voice*” (2007, Democratiya magazine). She argues that the development of feminist writings in India have not followed the same theories and ideas and have not been influenced by the same contexts. However, there has been a continual engagement between the two theoretical positions as people in India have for long lived under the strong influences and informed by Western reformist ideas such as liberalism. Chaudhuri’s claim is not that feminism has been developed and then imported from the West, as she argues that feminist

ideas and issues have always been debated in India as well. Rather, her argument rests on the fact that these issues have been debated differently, while always needing to distinguish itself and compare itself with Western feminist theorizing.

The perspective of Indian women as helpless and ignorant has been used to justify colonialist behaviours. Indeed, historical colonialism used the excuse of women's rights as a justification for continued oppression, such as with the British rule which was justified through intervention in child marriage, sati, referring to the act of burning alive the widow of a Hindu man, and other practices relating back to the white saviour complex described above. However, various essays written by Indian women have presented counter-narratives to the representation of non-western or black women as helpless and ignorant. Tarabai Shinde for example is seen as India's pioneering feminist literary critic, drawing links between colonialism and the commodification of women's bodies. Her writings are however seen as polemic as she represents the perceptions of an upper-caste Hindu women. Cornelia Sorabji writes on education as the main tool for social transformation of women. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, a Bengali Muslim writer, writes 'Sultana's Dream', a feminist utopia which envisions a world where women are in charge of the public sphere.

Aparna Sharma opens up about feminism and decolonial documentary practices in northern India in an interview with Anna Backman Rogers and Boel Ulfsdotter in 2019. She offers a window into the film industry in India and the relation between colonialism and feminism from an Indian perspective. When referring to the #metoo movement, she allows us to understand the pitfalls of the women from a decolonial perspective. The #MeToo movement started in India around 2017, but she raises the issue of economics and access in order for this movement to have a positive impact in the Indian society: "who has access to computer technology and the internet to be able to partake in #MeToo?" (Sharma, 2019). As this movement is technologically intensive, it can also be economically restrictive in societies where there is such high economic gaps and inequalities. The movement is also highly criticised by lower-caste women in India as it is seen as a mostly upper-caste and upwardly mobile persons (Sharma, 2019). Krupa Shandilya in 2015, following the media representation of the New Delhi rape case, raises the issue that the normative Hindu, middle class, upper-caste woman is the de facto subject of Indian feminism. According to Sharma in her interview, this bring to light a very important question: "*how can gender-based violence and gender inequity generally, be addressed in all of its enormity and complexity? If we want to do that then in a country like India, we have to address the experiences and needs of women*

from socially, economically and politically marginalised sections of society such as women from minority communities” (Sharma, 2019). She also points out the need to understand how to address sexual violence or harassment, that is not in the abstract, as they tend to be one element part of a much wider structure of power which are operating in society (Sharma, 2019). These movements, although they can have great impacts and change perceptions in a positive way in some societies, must be thought of critically as to the impact they will be able to have in other societies. This requires, according to Sharma, the questioning of our own privileges. However, she points out that this is “*not to suggest that they are or have historically been without any resources for resistance of their own*” (Sharma, 2019). The interview raises the worry that the #MeToo movement has accomplished most for already demographically privileged women rather than working class women and women of colour who are lacking access to it. The issue of the normalization of crimes against women is also raised, as the lack of utility a movement such as #metoo would have in these areas, taking the example of the region of Kashmir where military rule has been imposed and where violence is part of daily life.

Gupta in ‘Taking Action: The Desiring Subjects of Neoliberal Feminism in India’ retraces the history of the development of the women’s movement in India (2016). Although the idea of the development of feminism in three waves being criticized, she argues that a similar development occurred in India. The first refers to the mass mobilization of women during the times of the nationalist struggle, corresponding to the late colonial period of the late 1800s. this first wave was focused on the end of violent cultural practices such as the Sati, which is the practice of widow burning, and child marriage. India’s independence from British rule in 1947 led to proposals to induct feminists in the government (Kumar, 1999, p. 343). From there came the second wave that took place in the 1960s with the revival in the Indian Women’s Movement due to a lack of commitment to women’s issues in the economic policies adopted by the ruling classes after independence (Gupta, 2016). The third wave started with city-based Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and was focused mostly on issues of rape, dowry and domestic violence (Gandhi N. & Shah N., 1999). The feminist movements in India in the last decades have been majorly occupied with the desire of majorly middle-class women to occupy public spaces safely, without harassment and the threat of violence (Gupta, 2016).

However, various authors argue that the roots of contemporary Indian feminism can be traced back much further than the late colonial period of 1800s, such as Vijaya-Ramaswamy

in *“Rebels, Mystics or Housewives? women in Virasaivism”* (1996). Jasbir Jain in ‘Indigenous Roots of Feminism: Culture, Subjectivity and Agency’ offers an attempt to rescue the feminist movement in India from the accusations of being exported from the West (2011). It appears Gupta has only taken into account in her analysis from the moment that the word ‘feminism’ was actually used to describe the movement. Indeed, it can be traced back to the Bhakti Movement within Hinduism 1300 years ago, during the 7th century (Maduli Thaosen, 2017). The word ‘Bhakti’ mean devotion and surrender, and the movement refers to the idea that God dwells in each individual and therefore devotion anyone could attain God through faith and devotion. It was a protest against the domination of the Brahman caste over the others in the aim to bring more equality. All individuals according to the movement were considered equal in the eyes of God, which brought religion to the marginalized, which includes women. Women were therefore more able to express themselves spiritually, to become Saints and lead the masses in their own regions, breaking societal rules (Thaosen, 2017). As states by A.K. Ramanujan in ‘Talking to God’:

“In the Bhakti movements, women take on the qualities that men traditionally have. They break rules of Manu that forbid them to do so. A respectable woman is not, for instance, allowed to live by herself or outdoors, or refuse sex to her husband- but women saints wander and travel alone, give up husband, children and family.” (2006).

Women who embraced Bhakti would turn to religion and give up the marital expectations of society. In the 15th century, Mirabai who was a poet and a princess, decided to refused the legitimacy of her marriage and its consumption, instead devoting herself to worshiping gods in the temple (Pandey & Zide, 1965). She is represented as a strong woman and a symbol of the feminist movement for her ability to make her own choices. They also condemned the sexualization of the female body. Akka Mahadevi wrote in the 12th century:

*“People,
male and female,
blush when a cloth covering their shame
comes loose*

*When the lord of lives
lives drowned without a face
in the world, how can you be modest?*

*When all the world is the eye of the lord,
onlooking everywhere, what can you
cover and conceal?"*

However, their devotion was not only delimited to the obligation to leave the marital life. Sant Soyarabai for example wrote about her family life and her devotion to God, putting them in connection. She talks about married life and finding freedom amidst it. Although the word ‘feminism’ was not used at the time, it is understood that Bhakti women were the ones that laid the roots of feminism in India.

Examples of contemporary feminist movements that are specific to India are Dalit feminism, which challenges caste and gender roles among Dalits. It recognizes the intersectionality of the oppression that Dalit women in India face and have historically faced, represented on two levels: due their identity as Dalit; and because they’re women (Noyonika Bhattacharya, 2021). Another example is Desi feminism, which fights for intersectionality and acknowledges how race, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status affects feminism. Desi feminism would be the representation of a decolonial feminism, and yet it is largely unheard of. The perspective acknowledges the original different of Hindu culture and religion from Western ideas, but it claims that modernity exists not only within Western culture, but also within Desi culture. In an interview with the founders of The Gyani Rani (AKA The Wise Queen) activist platform, they stated that “*ultimately, feminism is believing in equal rights, those rights do not change under capitalist ideology or Indian or Hindu religious heritage*” (www.paristheotherway.com, n.d.). according to this movement, Indian feminism must be constructed in order to include and accommodate all beliefs, all people, all religions present in the country.

IV. Research methodology.

This chapter provides insight into the research design of this study, discussing in greater length the philosophical assumptions, research approach, strategy and methods used in the thesis and outlining the rationale for the research methodology used. The chapter also discusses the research population and data collection techniques, as well as the ethical

standards. The chosen research methodology is derived from the research ‘onion’ outlined by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill shown below:

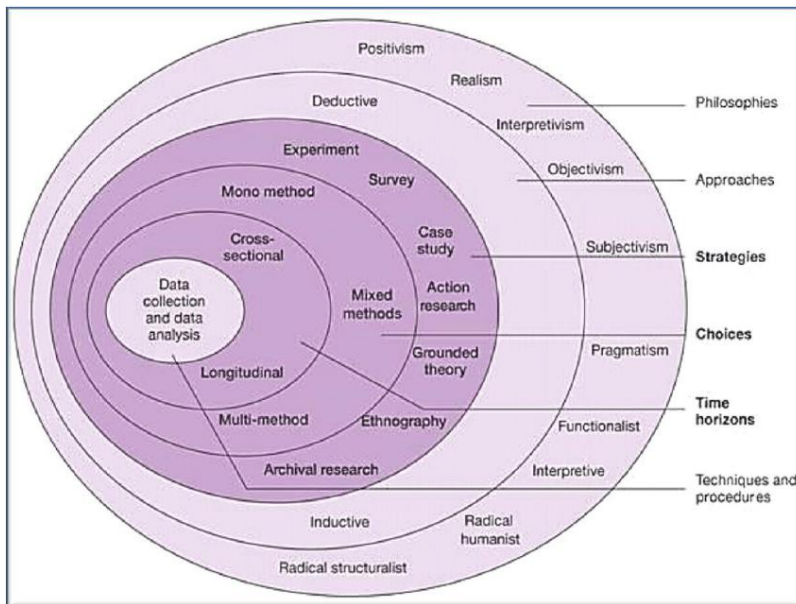


FIGURE 2: THE RESEARCH ONION (SAUNDERS ET AL., 2000).

A. Research design.

A.1. Philosophical assumptions.

The research philosophy is a reflexive process that carves pavement for planning and credible research analysis. According to Bryman and Bell (2011, p.17 et seq.), the research philosophy recognizes three categories of assumptions, including epistemology, ontology, and axiology. It provides a set philosophical framework which will frame the research.

In this research, the author acknowledges that the nature of reality is contextually bound. There are multiple realities that can and will result depending on who is doing the research as well as where and when the research is conducted. The **subjective ontology** approach is the most appropriate for this study. Subjectivism focuses on the individual’s experiences and views rather than the absolute view of social factors: it is “*always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity*” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21). The subject’s thoughts, emotions, beliefs, concerns are all taken into account for data collection and results are based on it. Subjectivism also assumes that “*observations are influenced by the observer and the observer is influenced by the observed*” (Levers, 2013, p.3). the subjective ontology is adapted in a study based on Decolonial feminist theory as it values all

knowledge and lived experiences as equal, therefore providing a new framework within the geopolitics of knowledge production demanding respect for the pluralization of differences.

Interpretivist epistemology is adopted for this research. It holds assumptions, highlighting the important essence of people's involvement and participation in cultural and social life. This approach is applied for research which "*looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world*" (Crotty, 1998, p. 68). Individual's ideas, beliefs and interpretation of the social and cultural existence are taken into account. Interpretivist assumptions are based on subjective ontology taking social entities into the lead.

In this research, a subjective interpretivist approach has been used to explore the collusion between post-colonial theories and the feminist thought in India. In-depth, phenomenologist view is adopted in order to get credible results for the impact of media based on the subject's personal experience and understanding. "*The phenomenologist views human behavior as a product of how people interpret the world. In order to grasp the meanings of a person's behavior, the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person's point of view*" (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975, p.13-14). Additionally, as one of the theories at the center of this research is critical feminism, it takes as a core epistemology the need to situate claims in the positionality of those making them. The importance of this epistemological choice has long been argued by feminists who call for the need to challenge the creation of knowledge in its context and subjectivity based on those creating it, which is often dominant groups, in this study represented by Western feminist academics. it is even more so important as the writer of this research is part of this dominant group, and must question the position of privilege from which she gets to write, research and analyze.

The selected philosophy is appropriate for the underlying research as perspectives on feminism are subjective and would vary from every individual and their experiences. The subject sparks variable set of emotions, perceptions, and experiences, and the chosen philosophy sheds significant light on Indian women's perceptions of Feminism.

A.2. Research approaches.

After explaining research philosophy, the next step consists in outlining the research approach for this thesis. The research can take two different approaches to relate theory to reality: inductive or deductive (Saunders at al. 2007, p.117). An inductive approach complies

with the research where a theory emerges from studying the data while comparing it to the research problem. The research process of deductive approach follows the order of theory, hypothesis, data collection, findings; the hypothesis is then either confirmed or rejected and concludes by revision of the research according to the results (Bryman, 2003, p.24).

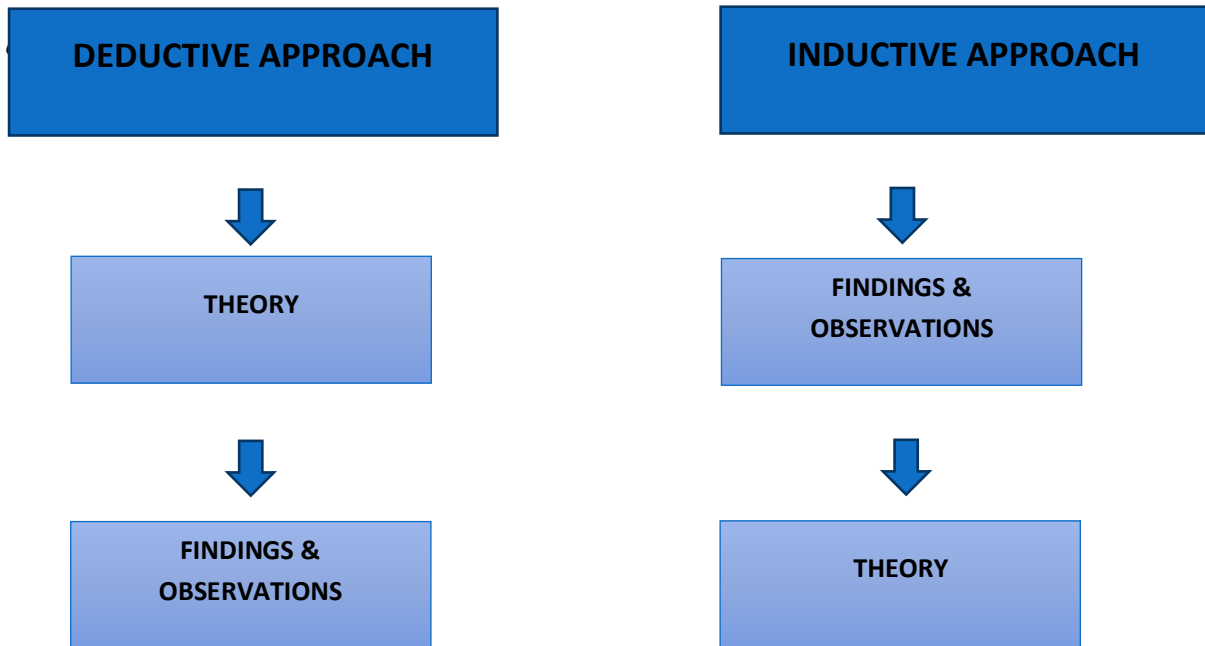


FIGURE 3: INDUCTIVE AND DEDUCTIVE RESEARCH PROCESS

The critical feminist approach chosen in this study, as well as the lack of existing data and literature in order to form a base theory from which to outline findings and observations implies the use of an **inductive approach**. We will therefore start with the hypothesis developed above, compare it with the findings and observations gathered from the primary and secondary data, to finally attempt to form a theory.

A.3. Research strategy.

After cementing the philosophy and the approach for the underlying research, the next substantial step is to frame it all with an appropriate research strategy. A research strategy provides general orientation to conduct the social research. This third layer of the research ‘onion’ focuses on how the researcher plans on collecting data: such data collections methods could include archival research, survey, experiment, ethnography, case study, action research, or grounded theory (Saunders et al. 2007).

For Charmaz, the reality that is collected through interviews is co-constructed on the one hand by the person being interviewed, and on the other hand by the researcher who brings their own perspective of reality into the research, through the interactions between researchers and participants (Charmaz, 2009). This is based on the idea that "knowledge rests on social constructions" (Charmaz, 2009, p. 130), putting forward the subjectivity of the researcher which cannot be neglected in any way, and which is therefore explicitly considered from the beginning of the research, in order to take it into account in the analysis and interpretation of the data (Charmaz, 2009). This methodology is rooted in **constructivism** and focuses on how participants construct meaning in relation to the area of inquiry. This study assumes that knowledge is constructed.

A **Case Study** is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident [...] The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.” (Yin, 2014, p.13). There is a lot of ambiguity in literature as to whether Case Study is a methodology, a method or a strategy. However, when basing the research methodology on Saunders’ research onion, Case Study is included in the research strategies layer of the onion. Yin (2014) also describes Case Study as a research method.

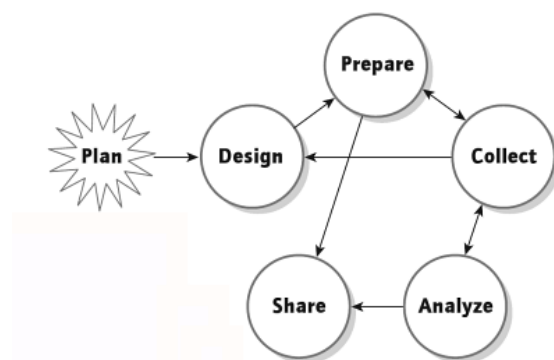


FIGURE 4: CASE STUDY RESEARCH PROCESS, ILLUSTRATION BASED ON YIN, 2014, P.1

Thus, this thesis is an **exploratory Case Study** focusing on the case of India as it explores the phenomenon and shows the need for further investigation into the issue, and will follow the research process illustrated in the figure above. This study also adopts a **constructivist understanding of knowledge construction**.

A.4. Research methods.

Quantitative “researchers gather data in such a way that the data are easy to quantify, allowing for statistical analysis” (Patten et Al., 2017, p.20), while qualitative “researchers gather data [...] that must be analysed through the use of informed judgment to identify major and minor themes expressed by participants” (Patten et Al., 2017, p.20). This study will collect **qualitative data** through interviews and existing literature, as well as alternative forms of data such as Instagram pages and websites.

The research will be conducted under the interpretative framework. In addition to material gathered from primary sources, such as qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews, this research will also be based on in-depth analysis of the secondary data, such as academic literature on the subject as well theatre plays, journalistic coverage of the events under consideration, and artworks, among other sources.

| ORIENTATION | APPROACH |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Strategical orientation | Qualitative |
| Principal orientation to the role of theory in relation to research | Inductive |
| Epistemological orientation | Phenomenological interpretivist |
| Ontological orientation | Subjective |

TABLE 1 RESEARCH DESIGN USED FOR THIS STUDY.

B. Research population and sampling.

The research population for this study consists of a group of Indian women (here, the term women refer to all person who self-identifies as a woman, without consideration for their biological sex) and focuses on their understanding and perceptions. There was no

previously defined age group for this research, on the contrary, the researcher has tried to interview a variety of ages as much as possible.

The Sampling Design Process

Population: individuals identifying themselves as women, no restriction on age, of Indian nationality and currently living in urban India.

Sample Size: 7.

Sampling method: non-probability sampling: individuals are selected based on non-random criteria, and not every individual has a chance of being included.

Sampling Technique: Purposive Sampling. The researcher uses their judgement to choose participants that fits the purpose of the research. In this case, the author attempted to choose people of different socio-demographic levels, and from different parts of India, in order to obtain different points of views.

The subjects will take part in an interview with the researcher. These interviews will be put to data analysis to form patterns and similarities, which will eventually be used to answer the research questions and hypothesis.

C. Data collection.

C.1. Primary data.

The primary data consists of qualitative data collected through in-depths interviews. The interviews were conducted online via video call due to the participants of the study living in India. 6 participants were interviewed.

Interview technique: The interview questions were formulated following a thorough review of the literature. The aim of developing interview questions after analyzing the previous research is to develop sharper and more insightful questions which would come to reinforce the data gathered from literature review. Additionally, the interview questions will be based on the 'flexible case design' (Yin, 2003) as it allows for interview questions to be adapted to the path of the interviews as well as allow for possible unexpected additional information to be included in the research. The interview questions will therefore consist of a guiding basis for the interviews, but allow for the possibility to continue on another path. The interview design will be semi-structured and performed along 'systematic control' (Andersen, 2013)

which allows to get back on track if the interviews side-track by getting back to the set of interview questions, while allowing for additional information to be collected. It was also important to leave room for the questions to be reformulated, in case the individual did not understand it clearly, as English was not their first language, nor of the researcher. It was therefore important to have the possibility of defining some of the terms if the person did not know them.

The questions include a first part that is an introduction during which the interviewer introduced herself before asking the participant to share some information about themselves and introduce themselves in return. The second part were general questions in order to know if the participant knew of feminism, how they perceived it, what it meant for them, as well as putting the notion in relation to their cultural context. The third part were more focused question on the exact topic of the study, relating to notions of colonialism.

The goal of having open interview questions is to avoid framing the path for their own experiences, as it is not one that is shared by the researcher of this study. The interviewer took notes during the interview and, in agreement with the participants, recording the discussion. After the transcription of these recordings, they were deleted, mainly at the demand of 2 participants.

Data collection: The primary data will consist of the information gathered directly from the participants of the study and will be collected through interviews. The interview questions are designed in such a way that it is easily answered by people and ultimately help the researcher achieve research objectives.

(See interview questions in Annex 1).

C.2. Secondary data.

The secondary data is collected by using existing academic research to support the primary data. It includes quantitative and qualitative data adopted from the existing literature in all forms, such as newspaper articles, letters, speeches, theatre plays, TV programs, reports, Instagram pages, etc. (Andersen 2006). In particular the study will use additional data to discuss the findings. The goal of this study is to conduct interviews in order to gather qualitative data and compare it to existing literary research on the subject, which will represent the secondary data. This work will analyze the testimonies of individuals identifying as women in India from a feminist perspective, in order to understand their

conception of feminism, but also their identification with the term. This study will also analyze various sources commonly used to share popular Indian feminists' perspectives, such as the content from the Instagram page “@feminisminindia” and “@indienwomeninhistory”.

C.3. Validity and reliability.

The validity of a Case Study research refers to establishing the domain to which a study's findings can be generalized (Yin, 2003, p.34). The relationship between validity and relevance is explored further here. The validity is about the general accordance between theoretical and empirical perceptions, while the relevance is how relevant the empirical selection is for the problem statement (Andersen 2006 p. 81). The validity of a research and its definition differs between a qualitative and a quantitative study. In a qualitative study, the validity depends on the conformity between the researcher's observations and the conclusion drawn. Conducting qualitative research through interviews, as explained later in the thesis, presents some limitations such as possible subjectivity: the empirical results will therefore be affected by the researcher's interpretation of the respondent's description of the reality (Kvale 2006 p. 231). As this research adopts a critical feminist approach to knowledge, the answers of the participants are believed to be subjective and open to interpretations on both ends (the research and the participants). This approach also argues that there is not one definite interpretation of knowledge but many, therefore for this research there are as many knowledges as there are participants and researchers.

Language barrier: language was a barrier for some interviews and the researcher had to leave the space for words to be translated or reexplained. One of the participants did not speak English, therefore the interview was conducted with the help of a third party who was able to translate. We must acknowledge as well that this leaves room for subjectivity and different interpretations, which is often the struggle in translation.

D. Compliance with ethical standards.

Any research which involves human subjects indeed encloses various legal, ethical and social issues. As the research is value driven and involves active participation from the researcher in the interviews, it is necessary that this emerges as a collaborative process between the participants and the researcher keeping the interests, morals and social values of each participant as the utmost priority. Diener and Crandall (1978, p. 19) described harm as anything from physical, to loss of self-esteem or stress-inducing and harm to the participant's

well-being or development. The participant should have the freedom to refuse to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable with and also the freedom to stop at any stage of the interview. All the participants have freely given informed consent of participation in this study. This implies that the researcher has a responsibility towards the participants to give them full prior disclosure of the topic, the agenda, and where it will be used.

Informed consent: A consent form is drafted for all the participants and sent by email before undertaking the online interviews which states that the data provided would be used for research. This Informed Consent Form was created based on the template developed by the WHO ERC (See appendix 3). The informed consent form (see Appendix) was read out loud to each participant in the beginning of the study, and a copy was sent to them. As these interviews were held online and not all participants had equal access to internet or ability to scan documents, their signature was not required.

Next primary ethical principal is maintaining the participant's **anonymity** and confidentiality. All participants will remain anonymous for this study, even if general information about them is shared in order to contextualize and understand their perception. The right to privacy is something which is held firmly and dearly by every individual being and is given the same importance in this research as well. Under no circumstances, is any participant manipulated, lied, cheated or involved with deception. Also, every process and step in the interview and the research is conducted with ethical decision making in mind. Additionally, the Code of ethics and policies and procedures of the ASA committee on professional conduct, developed by the American Sociological Association in 1999, was carefully followed all along this research.

The chosen strategy for this study, which consist in developing a decolonial feminist ethnography, allowed to encourage the researcher to engage with the politics of power and positionality in the research process in an attempt to create space for the voices and the lived experiences of “others”. This carefully-chosen approach to research encourages researchers to strive toward being ethically and reflexively engaged throughout the research process, to consider the subjectivity of the research, and to consider the participants in the interviews as active agents in the knowledge being produced.

V. Main findings of the study.

A. Data analysis.

For the purpose of this study, an iterative process of reading and reflecting on the data was necessary for the researcher to become immersed in the data (Yin, 2014). A mixed method of analysis comprising two types of analysis was conducted in this research: firstly, a **narrative analysis** and then a **thematic analysis**.

To conduct narrative analysis, it was important for the researcher to understand the background, setting, social and cultural context of the research subjects in order to have a better idea of what the subjects mean in their narration. This is especially important in this study which is context-rich research where there can be many hidden layers of meaning given by the experiences of the participants and that can only be uncovered by an in-depth understanding of the culture or environment. The approach to narrative analyses adopted for this research is derived from narrative constructionism, which argues that stories do not simply reflect or recount experience but rather have a role in people's lives (Smith, 2016). Therefore, before starting narrative research, the researcher needs to know as much about their research subjects as possible, as the answers comprise of personal opinions and experiences of the research subjects (Bryman, 2008). The researcher therefore started the interviews talking to the participants about themselves, asking them a few questions to lead the conversation but mostly listening to what they felt they wanted to share. The researcher also had to conduct extensive research beforehand through other sources, such as existing literature, personal recollections, videos, Instagram accounts, etc. the goal of this extensive research was for the researcher to get as much as possible a grasp and understanding of the subject at stake and of the social and cultural context that framed the study. This narrative analysis was therefore conducted in order to shed light on various aspects of the cultural or social phenomena at stake in this study, as it is particularly useful in research conducted with cultural subjects where the researcher must peel the many layers of a culture. While analyzing the various support that can be found on the subject, the researcher wrote their findings, then reviewed and analyzed them. The information gathered from the narrative analysis was cross-compared with the thematic analysis conducted on the primary data gathered from the interviews.

Notes were taken all along the interviews. Once the narratives have been collected, researchers then notice the patterns and themes emerging as they read and analyze the text.

The use of the thematic analysis will provide more detailed identification of the main themes. These elements were noted down and compared to other research on the subject.

The thematic analysis was conducted through manual deductive coding, using the method offered by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was used in order to identify the main themes from the interviews. Themes are identified in a latent interpretivist way. When conducting thematic analysis, the researcher systematically codes all data and then begins to organize the codes, based on similarity and lexical fields, into larger and larger categories that may lead to a hierarchical structure which allows to bring out the main themes.

The data was transcribed, then coded, analyzed, interpreted and verified, as per the steps of the thematic analysis method illustrated below:

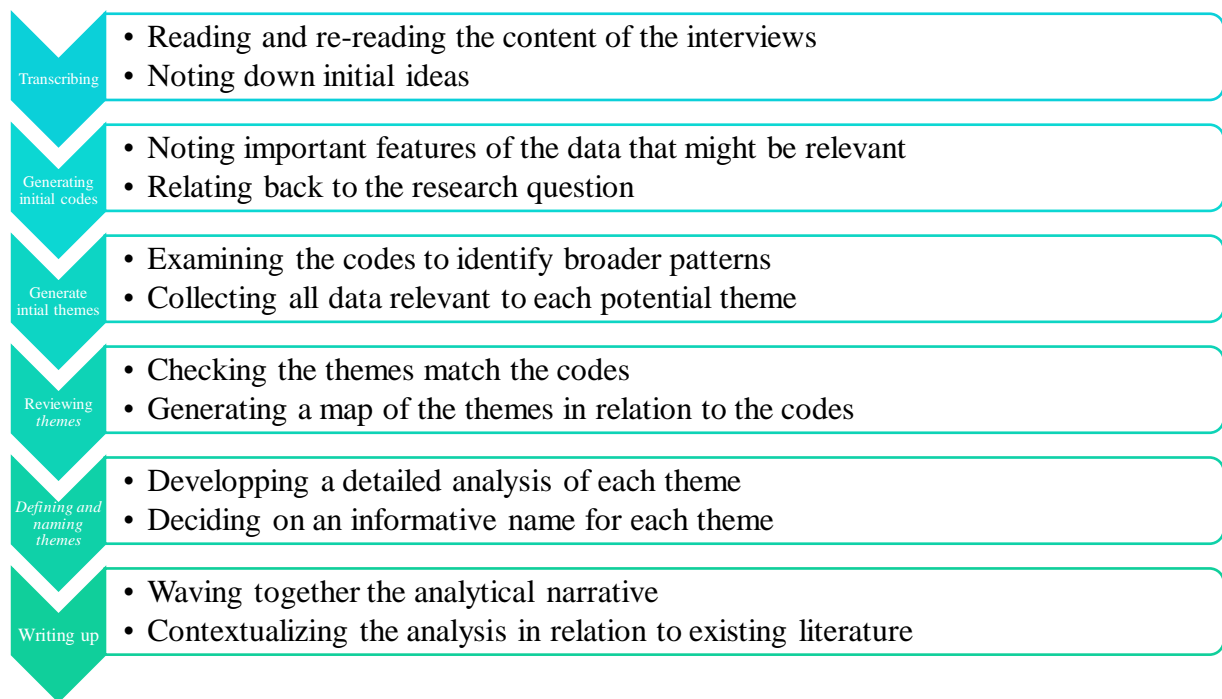


FIGURE 3: STEPS OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS (BRAUN & CLARKE, 2006).

A thematic coding that is done under deductive method means that the codes and themes are directed by existing concepts and ideas. This is in part done through the semi-structured interviews questions which led the participants to answer questions on specific themes, as well as by relating each theme to a research question.

The goal is then to figure out how it all fits together and then think of theories that can explain these findings as this is an inductive research process. The entire procedure is time consuming and requires skills to replicate the conversation and interpret it accordingly. The

finding will be discussed further and presented in a manner which is easily comparable to draw optimum results and findings. The goal of the comparison is to bring forward the elements that characterize the Indian perspective of feminism and understands them under decolonial lenses.

B. Research findings and discussion.

An integral determinant of the success of this research study is predicated on making sense of people's perceptions of feminism despite its variability and expansiveness. The first part of the interview allowed for the participant to give some **personal background context**, such as their family background and history, age, caste, religion, job and life experiences.

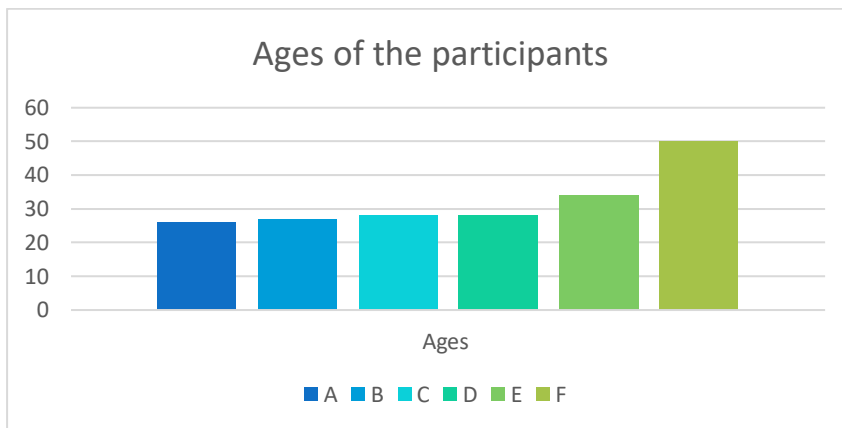


FIGURE 5: AGE OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

The goal was to interview participants from backgrounds, and in order to do so, to interview participants from a variety of age groups. However, in the age group from 20 to 50 years old, four out of 6 participants are under 30. It is here important to note that more women older than 30 were contacted, but that the communication was more complicated or they were busier and did not find the time for the interview, which can last a long time.

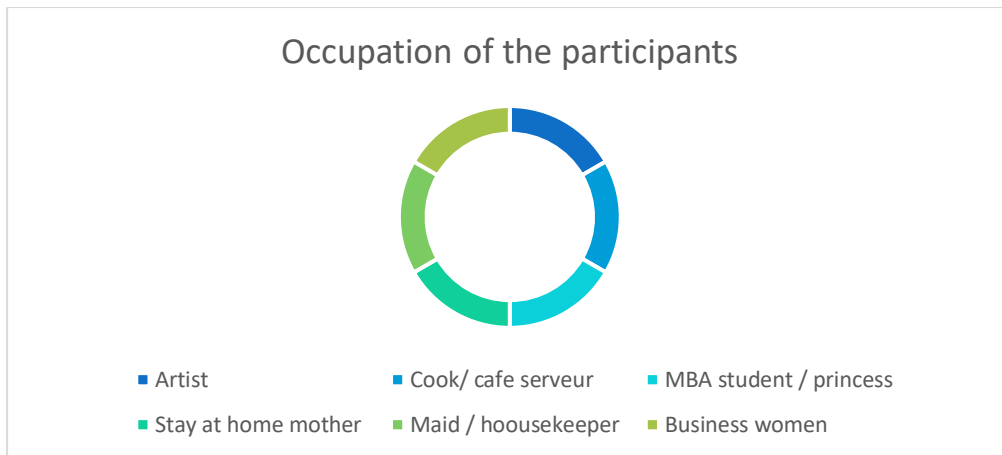


FIGURE 6: OCCUPATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

The participants were from various fields of occupation. One of the participants defined herself as an artist, but her royal status as an Indian princess takes up a lot of her time and is her main source of income.

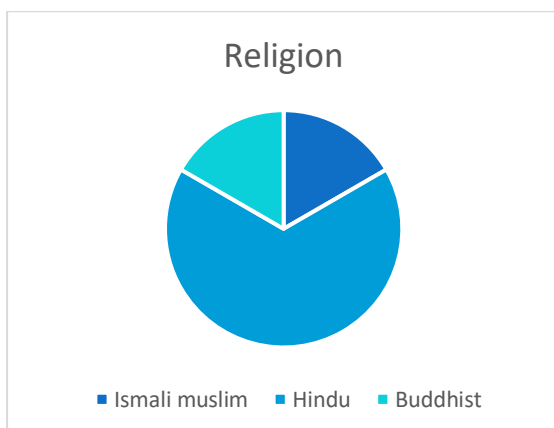


FIGURE 7: RELIGION OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

The religions of the participants interviewed corresponds to the reality of the Indian demography. Indeed, around 80 per cent of the population in India is Hindu, followed by Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and many other faiths.

On an interesting and important note, an element that was not part of the initial interview questions but that seemed to influence the perception on feminism of the participants and that therefore should be mentioned here was their **international experience**. Indeed, the participants with international experience, meaning who have spent some time or lived abroad, had a perspective that was more influenced by the western experience. The interview

with participant S especially brought this into light. The researcher attempts to put their point of view into its context and offer possible insights and explanation on this different perspective. She lived in the United States for a while, which could have influenced her perception of Feminism. The participant states that “*we need the help of western country*” and that Europe sets the norm and India is not doing well enough at following the norms. This seems to resemble more the usually western feminist perspective. The participant also puts a lot of emphasis on the equality meaning receiving the same pay, having access to positions of power, being head of businesses and lawyers. These ideas are ideas that are still very present in Indian society, especially in the richer and higher classes, due to the ongoing influence of the west on education and culture. There is this idealization of the Western standards and, as stated by Shrinidhi Rao, “any foreign domination for so long would scar the minds of the victims so deeply that it almost always translates into an “inferiority complex” (Shrinidhi Rao, 2016). The way the Indian history has been written, as well as the capitalistic expectations of success are two elements that still nowadays affect the perspective of the higher-class and higher caste. Therefore, we must suggest the possible impact of international experience on feminist perspectives.

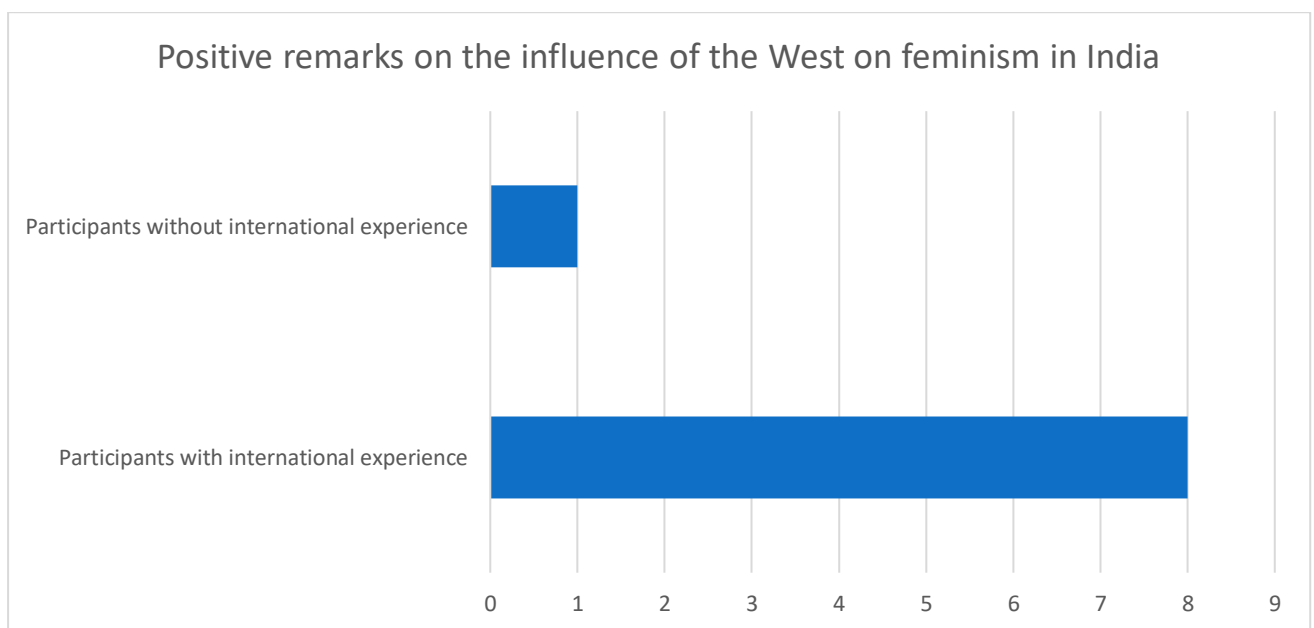


FIGURE 8: POSITIVE REMARKS ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE WEST ON FEMINISM IN INDIA.

The analysis of the data was also able to put the research in **contextualization**. The participants brought forwards additional elements which are important to point out in order to understand and contextualize this research.

The **diversity** in India is a theme that seems extremely important to take into account from the findings of this research. The theme was mentioned 11 times, putting into relation to the difficulty of conducting such research on such a diverse population and making it impossible to talk about India as one entity. As mentioned by many of the participants, it is extremely complex to talk about feminism in India in general as there is high risk to generalize one's own experience to a whole diversity of cultures, religions, communities and economic and social situations. It is important to acknowledge that India is the second most populated country in the world, with a population over 1.3 billion. India is a secular pluralist state that is home to most religions known to mankind, with the possible exception of Shintoism. The country also has 23 official languages, as well as almost a hundred more languages and dialects that have more than 10,000 speakers each. Participant V mentions this diversity of languages "*Culture wise my upbringing was very mixed, my dad cannot speak my native language which is the language of my mother, he can only speak the local language, but my mum taught us how to speak her native language so I speak different languages with my mum, my dad and my friends*". According to her, this was both a blessing as it allowed her to be more open to other cultures and to learn more, but it was also very difficult as she was struggling with her sense of identity. Identity in India is largely based on its diversity, as stated by various authors, as most people in India are part of a minority (Tharoor, 2007). Indian identity is therefore a complex mix of dynamics between caste, language and ethnicity. Two Indian individuals may share the same religion, but they could share very little identity in terms of rituals, dress, appearance, customs, languages or even political objectives (Tharoor, 2007). Indeed, this has to be accepted as one of the limits of the research, as happens with many academic research that explore a group of human beings from diverse cultures and backgrounds, even when those are located in the same geographical areas. The diversity in the perception of feminism and the needs of women is not only present between different parts of the world but also within a country, and as with the dominance of white feminist ideas over those of third-world countries, there is in India the dominance of one perception of feminism over the rest.

This diversity of the Indian population is also a strength. Despite this mix of languages, English is commonly well understood and used across urban India. The strong diversity of the country has resulted in many distinct cultures and ethnicities, each with differing social traditions and cultures, embodying the cultural richness of the country. However, the general perception of feminism in India puts the middle-class upper caste women as the subject of the

entirety of the feminist fight. As mentioned by Gupta, the sentiments and desires that are expressed and embodied by members of neoliberal India's "consumer-oriented new middle class" (Baviskar & Ray, 2011) largely shape and define recent feminist activism in India (2016). Additionally, this otherness that characterizes the usual perception of non-western women as a category in itself is here challenged, as there are as many experiences as there are cultures. As done by Bulbeck, the grand opposition between cultures is attempted to be avoided by using specificities of religions (Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism), class background and geographical locations (country, city, foreign experience). The fact that these divisions cut across each other shows even more the false homogenisation of the East (Bulbeck, 1998, p. 4). The acknowledgment of the diversity of a country such as India which was even more brought forward in this study is important, as without research such as this one, many western feminist academics will continue to study feminism solely based on the white western experience.

Another element was brought forward, being the **economic diversity and economic inequalities**. Through the interviews, a few participants brought forward this element which makes feminism something even more complex in India, and is an element that is also recurrent in the existing literature. The diversity in economic situations in India implies a diversity in opportunities and access to education, for access to information about feminism and access to possibilities and choices. The neoliberalism that characterizes India's economic reforms in the 1990s is one of the elements that has influenced the emergence of an upper-class centred feminism. Hemangini Gupta, in *Taking Action: The Desiring Subjects of Neoliberal Feminism in India* (2016) explores the correlation between India's entry into neoliberal market privatization, including with the resultant consumer citizenship practices, and the shaping of contemporary middle-class feminism in India. The analysis of the various data brings forward the complex connections between capitalism and neoliberal feminism that characterize the contemporary feminist movements in India.

Through the set of questions asked during the interview and the thematic analysis conducted on the data, the main themes were brought to light.

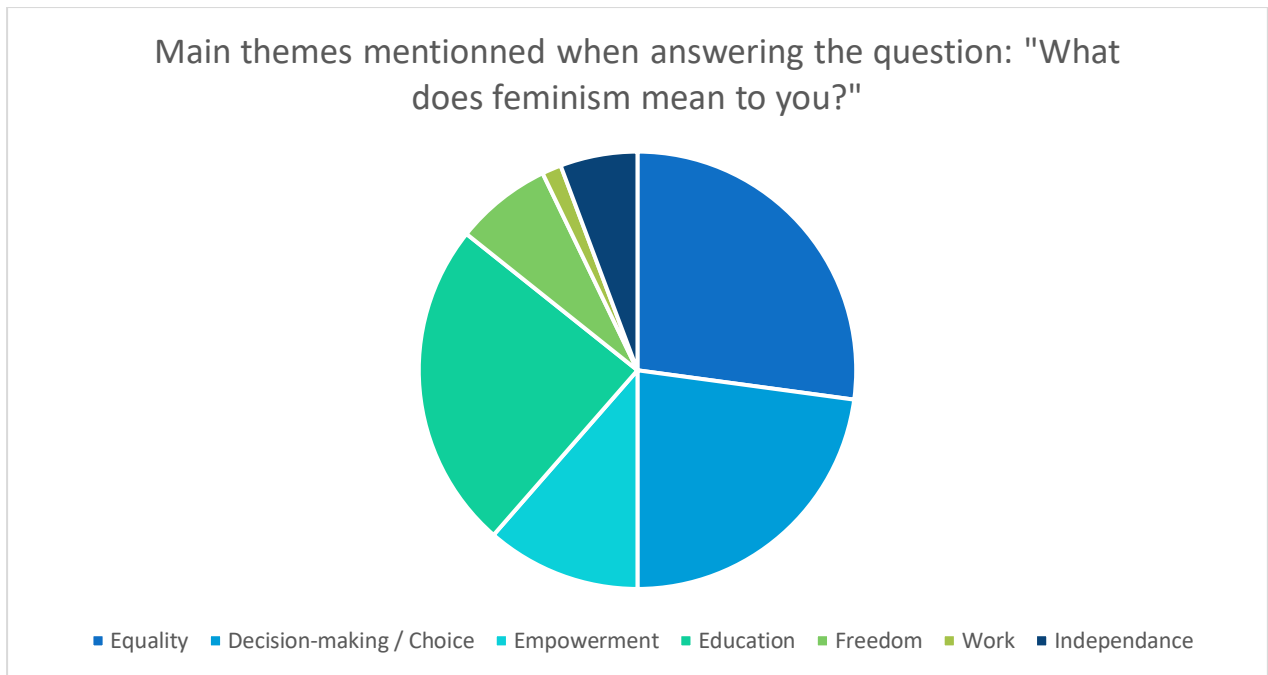


FIGURE 9: MAIN THEMES MENTIONED WHEN ANSWERING THE QUESTION: "WHAT DOES FEMINISM MEAN TO YOU?".

The theme that was most brought forward in the data analysis from the interviews was related to the notion of **equality**, referring to the equal political, economic, and social rights and opportunities for women in India. Equality generally refers to the rights for the same salary for the same job, the right for equal access to education and work, health, as well as political representation and political rights. However, only 2 participants mentioned politics and **political representation**. Participant A belongs to a royal family and stated: *“my grandmother was supported by my grandfather to enter into politics, she was an excellent home maker and did not forget that and at the same time as being an Indian leader while doing a lot of philanthropic work”*. In her family, it is extremely important to upkeep with very traditional values such as wearing only traditional clothes, performing all traditional religious and cultural rituals. Indeed, the Hindu traditions are at the center of everyday life. Additionally, women in her family are involved in politics and encouraged to study, while at the same time encouraged to get married, often an arranged marriage in order to keep the high family status, and to be a good homemaker. Participant A states that for her, the Hindu culture encourage her to study, to learn and to read. Participant V also mentions that Power has been a tool to suppress the possibilities and power of women. She states that the female leaders in the country *“are being oppressed, called irrational, emotional, very judged when it comes to their character, every personal life detail is used against them so they can*

discourage women from being rulers". According to this participant, this comes mostly from external influence during the colonization as before women in power were promoted. For participant V, equality is not just access to the same jobs but is much more complex. As she loves to hike and is therefore often surrounded by groups of men, she mentions the fact of being seen and treated differently, being considered as 'easy', or nerdy, and being much more quickly judged. However, 4 of the participants mention the fact that women and men could never be exactly equal and that goal is not to be exactly the same as men: they accept a biological binary that for them is complementary, although not one is better than the other as there are things men can do and women struggle to, and there are things women can do and men would struggle to. Participant V also notes that some women do have the same capacities than men, and it is good for them, but everyone is built differently. It is also interesting to note that none of the participants mentioned the term 'equity'. The equality however is limited by various factors such as economic difficulties which are translated into access inequalities to technology, education, information, and much more.

Inside the theme of equality can be found an element that seemed so important to the participants that it was here considered a theme itself. This was **education**, being mentioned many times by the participants, is an important element in the understanding of a culture and its subjectivities, whether it be cultural or academic. In India, there is a huge gap in the access to education: out of 100 students, 29 per cent of children drop out of school before completing the full cycle of elementary education, and these are often from the most marginalized part of society (SRI-IMRB Surveys, 2009 and 2014). These inequalities are grouped in the inequality of opportunity, which can be a result of various types of inequality such as geographic inequality, economic, gender inequality, inequality of representation, of access to the internet in order to learn on these subjects. The huge part of the Indian population from more rural areas that were never given the opportunity to learn English would never have access to the information found online about feminism, they would not be given the opportunity to learn. Therefore, all of the participants agree that access to education is central to the development of Indian feminist ideas. Participant C, who is a housekeeper in a rich family, stated that access to **work** has allowed her to have more freedom and to be stronger for her family, but that access to education would give her this freedom for longer-term as right now she can lose her job at any time, and she does not have as much choice. Indeed, she does not have the opportunity to just leave her job or to move to another city because she simply wants to: she has a duty towards her family and her loved-ones to

participate in providing for them until she has her own children. Access to education, whether it being school or cultural education, was also mentioned as a limit to the development of feminist thoughts and ideas in India. Education about feminist values is equally important, and various groups are attempting to make information about feminism less academic and more accessible, such as the Instagram page and website www.bebadass.in, the Instagram page @feminisminindia, and @indianwomeninhistory.

Words related to the lexical field of **choice** and **decision-making**, even if the choice is to marry, to take care of children. According to the participants, choice does not inherently mean that all women want power, that strong women want to climb the ladder or to drift away from their cultural practices. This reflects back to the Bhakti movement and the women who decided to find their freedom and spirituality, whether in married life or by giving it up, as long as they decided what was the right way for them to devote themselves to God. The participants consider the expectations of what feminists should want a norm largely set by capitalistic values in the Western white world. The interviews bring to light that the wishes of women differ and that each of them should have the choice to live the way they want without guilt: guilt to choose an arranged marriage, guilt to conform to societal norms, pressure to stray away from their culture or their religion because it is considered patriarchal rather than be an active change within it. This idea of choice was also mentioned by one of the participants regarding the use of head coverings. It is seen by many white feminist movements as a marker of dominance to the man and to a patriarchal society, yet, some women may choose to wear it for reasons of respect to their cultures, to their religions, their ancestors, or for any other reason that should not be discussed. Their choice in doing so is what really matter in the ideas of what feminism is. This is also something defended by the collective Susu in Brussels, a decolonial feminist collective.

It is important to note that the mentions of decision-making were mostly related to the idea of **family**. The concept was found to be very central to the perceptions of the participants on what feminism means. The family is at the center of the Indian culture, cooperation between family members is crucial in the context of economic inequalities and poverty. In addition to the importance of the family, the importance of **care** was brought forward: care for oneself, for their parents, for the people they love and who love them, and therefore for their family. The strength of a women is shown by the way they are able to care for their family. Participant A mentioned this strength of women and the relation to duties: *“the women who influenced my life have been great influence, for example when my dad passed*

away my mother took over everything and I supported her, she is a very strong woman". However, this participant acknowledges that her mother was able to do so because she was already very independent when her father was alive and shared the duties with him, and adds that *"all these women have shaped who I am as a woman today and they have set an excellent example of feminism through their power and determination"*.

This notion of **independence** was mentioned only 4 times in the interviews, and seems to have a different connotation to what would usually be defined in western feminism. Participant A mentioned independence as the first thing when she thinks of what feminism is, but this independence for her does not mean not to need the help of anyone: *"that doesn't mean you do not need support, you are not detached to people who love by because they help you in your journey, they are your base from which you grow and you must also take care of them"*. Participant V also support this idea, stating that you need as a woman to first be able to care for yourself in order to be able to care for others. To participant S and C, independence means rather that women are not lesser than men, that there are things they can do better and therefore do not need the help of men to do these things: they can take care of themselves.

Family life in India is very different from other countries in the world, and it the family structure even differs from every region, religion, caste, and traditional practices. Children are often considered to be gifts from God and are extremely cherished. Marriage is very central to the Indian culture and there are many different traditions surrounding it: it is considered to be one of the most important phases of one's life and traditionally arranged marriages are very common. Out of the participants, only one is not married and she stated that she receives a lot of pressure for her family surrounding the need to marry. Marriages are considered to be the union of two families rather than of just two individuals, and they strengthen the economic stability and recognition in society of the whole extended family. The 'duty' that is represented by each member of the family is extremely important. For example, in the traditional Indian family structure, the mother-in-law hands over the 'keys' of the household to the newly married daughter-in-law, therefore handing over the responsibility of the family, even if she stays around to teach her the 'correct' ways to run the household. The responsibility of the father is shared with the newly-married son and corresponds to the financial responsibility. It is also very common for children to live with their parents until they get married, and even sometimes after marriage in order to keep taking care of them. One of the participants mentions that in her culture, women are seen as strong as they can

carry children, which is already a lot of work and duty, therefore it is normal that the men have more duty to provide financially for the family. Although this represents the traditional family structure of the Indian culture, new types of family structures are developing in the country. However, as stated by the participants, this family structure gives the power to the woman of the family who is the one who keeps the family together and therefore represents the root of all family dynamics. The Indian family is still nowadays an institution and it is seen as a way of nurturing and preserving the cultural and social values passed down from generation to generation, such as respect for the elderly and various age-old traditions, customs, and ways of living (Naidu, 2018). The Indian family system lays the seeds for social cohesion and democratic thinking.

As mentioned in the article written by Venkaiah Naidu, vice-president of India since 2017, this importance of family dates back to the ancient times and symbol of the collectivist culture of India, but this has been influenced and impacted by western influence as well as growing urbanization (2018). The change in socio-economic factors have played a role in the dissolution of the joint family system: living with their family was the only way to take care of each other as it provides protection and economic support to all members of the family. However, it has been noted that generally in joint families, the gendered division of work is much more present. Modern day women, as represented by the western feminist perspective engraved in power and modernity, are often blaming the joint family system for the oppression of women, and this even more regarding women in the Global South. Nowadays, nuclear families especially in urban areas are much more common.

In Western feminism, the thought of preserving the cultural values is not as often a priority, but in a society that has already and is still losing so much of its culture due to **western influence** and the **increasing international pressure for modernity**, this preservation is viewed by many, including feminists, as essential. The importance of the family is recognized internationally: the UN General Assembly created the 'International Day of Families' to be held on May 15 of every year, and the importance of families in the creation of healthy societies has been recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Naidu does note that "*societies evolve with changing times and any process that brings in progressive customs and practices should be welcomed by one and all*" (2018), mentioning the emancipation of women as essential to break multiple societal problems present in the Indian society such as child marriage, gender violence, dowry menace and superstitious customs.

The western feminist theories were developed by women who, yes are disadvantaged amongst society for their gender, but they have privileges in race and class which offers them resources and opportunities to share their voices with the world. Many women from Eastern and Oriental societies were never given these platforms to express their needs and their demands. This led to the voices of only a selected group of women in the world to be heard and represented as the modern and the **empowered**. But empowered does not mean the same for all women in different societies. The idea of a modern empowered women in a capitalist world was the one that was set as the norm for all feminist movements. But the analysis of the data and the discussion with the participants has reinforced the ideas developed in the existing literature that not all women want or need the same. Even though the term ‘empowered’ was used multiple times in the interviews, it is clear that it does not mean the same for all. As mentioned in the findings, the development of this modern idea of the feminist women climbing the ladder of the capitalist society puts pressure of those in other societies who wish to build a family, marry, or to take upon themselves other parts of their cultures that is commonly seen as patriarchal such as arranged marriage.

On the matter of the **relation of feminist values with their culture and their religion**, many participants mentions that the strength and power of women have always existed. Feminism is not therefore a new idea that was brought from the Western thought. An example of that that is mentioned, especially in the Hindu religion, are the amount of Indian **female Goddesses**. Participant C mentions Durga, the Mother Goddess, who is represented as benevolent, protective, fierce while also being compassionate, and that was an idol for her in her early years. Participant L mentions cultures in India where *“the family name comes from the women, the property is given by heritage through the women of the family, the first-born girl child”*. As stated by Bhattacharjee regarding feminism in Hindu women, *“while we strive to create an equal world, we look back at the ancient Hindu imagery of the “ardhhanarishwar” where the masculine and feminine are respected as two halves of one being, complimenting each other in a perfect balance”* (2020). Participant M even said that *“all of the things that empower women in Indian culture come from our Hindu scriptures”*. According to her, the Hindu religion sets a marker for the respect of strong women. This however depends on the relations different families have with religion, as different families will venerate different Gods and Goddesses. As argued by Desi feminists, Hinduism as a religion is one where we do not pray to the stereotypical idea of God as a form but rather to

what it embodies. Participant M also stated that “*cultural systems of value of my religion stands for equality, emphasis on respecting women, treating women equal*”. Dayanand Saraswati, a famous scholar, preached against many rituals of the Hindu religion such as idol-worship, caste by birth, animal sacrifices and restrictions of women from reading Vedas.

The founders of the Gyani Rani feminist group also remind us that initially the Santana Dharama, on which is based Hinduism and which is the Sanskrit, is not a religion but more a way of life. The construction of patriarchal expectations in Hinduism does not come from the Hindu culture itself but more on the history of the construction of oppressions. An example that is given is Mahabharata, a time where there was no concept of marriage and women and men were free to go as the please. Marriage and fidelity of the women were created in order to establish fatherhood. The Desi feminist group also remind us that in the Sanskrit, women and men are equal in the sense of their soul, as it has no gender. However, it is important to note that as the majority of the participants in this study were of Hindu faith, and related back to the cultural diversity of the country, it does not represent all cultures in India.

Motherhood is viewed as sacred and many of the terms used in Hindu relates back to that. Indeed, two participants mentioned the “mother India” which is often used to refer to the Indian nation, and refers to the power of the female as a giver of nature and life, as the plant earth is also referred to as “mother earth”. Participant M also mentions that fact that cows are sacred and are also called “matha”, meaning mother. Participant V mentions a popular Indian saint called Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, regarded every woman of the society, including his wife, Sarada, as holy mother. Participant S also mentioned the rituals for a girl’s birth that are way more important than those for the birth of a boy. Indeed, when a girl is born it is called ‘money’, as a girl is supposed to bring good luck to the family.

According to 3 of the participants, the core Hindu culture has always a sense of respect for the female, but it is not followed through in everyday life. Participant M and C gave the example of the Hinda Shari civilization. Additionally, there is a huge gap between what it is written in the scriptures and what people are choosing to **interpret** from it as the scriptures are often read and shared by men, and they therefore interpret the scripture to their convenience. The participants therefore believe that as time went by, men have modified the readings of the core scriptures in order to manipulate the women into accepting domination. However, this has nothing to do with the religion in itself but rather with the patriarchal influence over time.

Another participant stated that *“In a very subtle form it has always existed, even in the older times the women were pretty much the rulers of their homes. Their choice was not given to step out but within the area in which they operated they had the freedom to do as they pleased and make choices that needed to be made.”* Her understanding of the feminist values is indeed very engraved into the notions of family and decision-making. This can be related to the idea that pre-colonial women had more power, as they were the head of the family, which was also brought forward multiple times in the interviews, relating to matriarchies, to heads of families and heads of the house which were trusted to make all the important decisions. It can be related to what Chilla Bulbeck called ‘**declension narratives**’ explained earlier in this research.

Two of the participants mentioned that the **negative perception** that Feminism receives in India is connected to those who take it *“too far”*, those who *“become aggressive and fight, thinking this is the way they will get what they want”*. According to participants L and M, at least in the Indian culture, the aggressivity will not help to bring around more freedom and equality for women, rather it gives it a *“negative connotation”*.

In the conversation regarding the **impact of colonialism on feminism**, participant M mentions the British ‘divide and conquer’ rule which was used during colonization. According to her however, this technique is not specific of the British colonization but come from *“when invasion started to happen, way before the British, when their culture was brought in with them, legislations and structures changed”*. The invasion she is referring to is the Islamic invasion of India, also called the Mohammedan conquest of India. Before this, although there were wars between Indian princes, they agreed on codes of honour which were respected by all sides and included the fact that women were never to be violated. The sacrifice of this code of honour for victory was regarded as worse than death. India was invaded multiple times by invaders from middle east, far east and Europe, which is recognized to have had a multitude of consequences on the culture but also on the disappearance, diversification, evolution and adaptation of several religious practices in the name of Hinduism. It is recognized that the European colonization did bring some positive elements for the emancipation of women, such as encouraging Indian social reformers to challenge practices such as ‘Sati’, a practice of mass suicide in order to reserve their honour from army men, but also fuelling the rebellion against a ‘common enemy’, the European invader. However, many social issues in India are a direct result of colonialism. Indeed, Section 377 (S377) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), criminalizing homosexuality, was

introduced during British colonial rule in 1864, and was finally struck down in 2018. In ancient times, homosexuality, transsexuality and sexual liberation were welcomed in India through religion as well as communities, with the example of the hijras, a traditional intersex or transexual community in India and South Asia more broadly which were known as powerful individuals (interview with the founders of The Gyani Rani activist platform, retrieved from the website paristheotherway, n.d.). The abuses and violence over women perpetrated by the British colonial groups also had and still has nowadays an impact on Indian women. Intersectional feminists believe that the colonial impact of the British Crown and the creation of new social categories by colonial administrators hardened any previously flexible caste boundaries. It is therefore argued by Indian feminists, and more specifically Desi feminists, that the Western capitalist society still harms communities worldwide, and this not just within India or Indian culture.

C. A proposed framework.

Although the general themes that came out of the analysis of the interviews are quite representative of the general white feminist perception of what feminism is, when going deeper in the understanding and interpretation of these themes, we realize that their meanings hold different values. Indeed, the notion of equality is taken from a very different perspective that is engraved in the Indian culture. The notions of decision-making, independence and freedom are directly connected by the participants to family and the need of care. The family values are very central to their perception, but in a way where they get to choose how they want that family to be, they get to choose what place they want in it and they get to choose whether to have children or not. The notion of duty to their parents and, if they choose to have children, to them as well, is indeed very engraved. This importance of family is part of the ancient Indian culture, and it has been challenged due to western influence, which threatens the preservation of the Indian culture.

A recommended decolonial feminist framework for academic research regarding India was brought forward by this research. The proposed idea is to **rethink and challenge the concepts of modernity/coloniality** in order to give legitimacy to the knowledge and experiences of gender, identity, and work from women in India. This refers to the fact that as academics, we need to work with rather than about women in India. Even better, as feminist academics we can provide the space for India women directly to bring into light their research and their academical studies. Therefore, it is important to adopt a critical perspective

of our own research process, theories, and leading methodology, which must be constantly put into the broader perspective of our own subjectivity as western academist.

Indian women must become agents in the research process and the production of knowledge. Due to the centrality of family and the joint family system in India, educating a woman means educating a whole family and a whole society, which is a requirement to the growth and progress as a nation. The importance of **education access** for all is therefore central to the results of the study. However, this education must be developed by Indian women for Indian women rather than following the education norms set by the West. It is important for **pluriversal knowledges** to be able to coexist equally (Mignolo, 2011). Doing so allows to acknowledge the variety and diversity of lived experiences and created knowledge, which corresponds to a constructivist perspective which claims that knowledge is constructed and unique to each individual. In order to do so, we must leave the space for the **proposal of new feminist, indigenous, subaltern and decolonial methodological approaches**. Changing the way academic feminist do research about other countries, and especially in this case about India, allows to work in order to shift our worldviews towards peaceful coexistence of knowledge.

The goal is to create in the academic world a pluriversal space in which diverse epistemics can meet, recognizing as well as valuing the knowledge that has come from the lived experiences of the gendered colonial discourse. The voices of Indian women need to be heard if we are to construct a pluriversal understanding of feminism representing their knowledge and lived experiences.

VI. Conclusion.

This research aimed to critically engaged with the diversity of perspectives within post-colonial theories and postcolonial feminism in order to counter hegemonic Western creation of knowledge in academia. This research explored the gap in decolonial feminist literature regarding the specific case study of feminism in India. The findings of this research have allowed to narrow-down a perspective of feminism centered on the Indian experience rather than viewed through a generalization based on the feminist ideas developed in Western countries. The findings of this study also suggest the possibility of the influences of international experience on the feminist perspective of individuals, which is therefore suggested for further research. Indeed,

However, this study has also brought forward the issue of the generalization of what Indian women want without considering the diversity of their experiences within the country, such as the presence of cultural and religious diversity as well as economic inequalities which greatly influence individual's perspectives, as per a constructivist understanding of knowledge. The element of the diversity within India was brought forward while conducting the research, and the complexity of defining feminism in various contexts is deeply recognized.

The perspective of feminism through the lenses of Indian women seem to correspond to the Western feminist perspective, with dominant elements such as equality, decision-making, empowerment, education, freedom, and independence. However, when analyzed closer, it is possible to make up a contrasting definition of these exact notions. The linguistic elements are indeed defined differently and incomparable due to personal experiences in different contexts. These central elements to feminism according to the participants seem to be centered in the notion of family, with the importance of the joint-family system in order to preserve cultural values. These cultural and religious values are furthermore identified in this study as corresponding to some extent to the feminist values held by Indian women, such as with the prevalence of Indian female Goddesses, illustrated by the Declension Narratives.

There seems to be a consensus between the participants and when analyzing other sources that the increased international pressure for modernity based on the western influence is killing the culture, recognizing the impact of colonialism on the country. The white savior complex is still nowadays prevalent in how we perceive other cultures, and is extremely problematic, including in feminist academia in the West. This study therefore points out the importance of feminist movements such as Desi feminism, a movement based on the India experience, which acknowledges the intersectionality of oppressions and the special complex contact of Indian culture relating to feminist values. The researcher did not previously know about Desi feminism before conducted the study, but the discover and research about it was extremely valuable in the research process.

emergence of new theoretical and empirical frameworks based on the experiences of non-western women.

The process of this research has been full of discoveries, learning, challenges, questionings and doubts for the author, who feels extremely grateful to have had the chance to expand their knowledge and understanding of a subject that stimulate greatly their interest. Therefore, through reading this research and the findings, the authors hopes that their work will allow to share these questionings with others and to, hopefully, motivate the interest for further studies regarding decolonial feminism and decolonial understandings of academic research in general.

Bibliography.

Scholarly monographs

Al-Ali, N. S. (1994). Gender writing/writing gender : the representation of women in a selection of modern Egyptian literature. In *Internet Archive*. Cairo, Egypt : The American University in Cairo Press.

<https://archive.org/details/genderwritingwri0000alal>

Allen, A. (2016). *Feminist Perspectives on Power* (E. N. Zalta, Ed.). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy; Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-power/#IntApp>

Al-wazedi, U. (2020). Postcolonial Feminism. *Companion to Feminist Studies*, 155–173.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119314967.ch9>

Andreotti, V. (2011). Gayatri Spivak's Contribution and Critics. In *Actionable Postcolonial Theory in Education* (pp. 37–55). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230337794_4

Arvin, M., Tuck, E., & Morrill, A. (2013). Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy. *Feminist Formations*, 25(1), 8–34.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2013.0006>

Ballestrin, Luciana. (2016). Decolonial feminism: a critical debate.

Baxter, Leslie, and Dawn Braithwaite. 2008. *Engaging Theories in Interpersonal Communication: Multiple Perspectives*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483329529>.

Bendix, D. (2020). Beyond the Master's Tools?: Decolonizing Knowledge Orders, Research Methods and Teaching. In F. Müller & A. Ziai (Eds.), *Beyond the Master's Tools?:*

Decolonizing Knowledge Orders, Research Methods and Teaching. Rowman & Littlefield.

Boonzaier, F., & van Niekerk, T. (Eds.). (2019). *Decolonial Feminist Community Psychology* (1st ed., pp. 0–160). Springer Cham.

Appelrouth, Scott; Edles, Laura Delfor (2008). *Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory: Readings and Text* (First ed.). Pine Forge Press. (ISBN 978-0761927938).

Bulbeck, Chilla (1998). *Re-orienting western feminisms: women's diversity in a postcolonial world*. Cambridge New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 9780521589758.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Crotty, M. *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research pro-Cess*. London, Sage Publications., 1998, p. p.68.

Denzin, Norman K, and Yvonna S Lincoln (2005). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

Gandhi N. and Shah. N. (1999). Organisations and autonomy. In N. Menon (Ed.), *Gender and politics in India* (pp. 299-341). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Gangoli, Geetanjali (2007). *Indian Feminisms – Law, Patriarchies and Violence in India Archived 1 May 2013 at the Wayback Machine*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited. pp. 10–12.

Gines, Kathryn (2014). “Race Women, Race Men and Early Expressions of Proto-Intersectionality, 1930s-1930s,” in Goswami, O’Donovan and Yount (eds.), *Why Race and Gender Still Matter: An Intersectional Approach*, New York: Routledge.

Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Adline.

- Holub, Renate (1994), "Between the United States and Italy: Critical Reflections on Diotima's Feminist/Feminine Ethics," *Feminine Feminists: Cultural Practices in Italy*, ed. Giovanna Miceli Jefferies, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press: 233–260. [Google Scholar]
- Jain, J. (2011). *Indigenous Roots of Feminism: Culture, Subjectivity and Agency*. SAGE publications India.
- Kumar, R. (1999). From Chipko to sati: The contemporary Indian women's movement. In N. Menon (Ed.), *Gender and politics in India* (pp. 342-369). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, G. (1983). This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color. In *Google Books*. Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press.
- Nair, R. & Vollhardt, J.R. Intersectionality and Relations between Oppressed Groups: Intergroup Implications of Beliefs About Intersectional Differences and Commonalities.
- Oyewumi, Oyeronke 2003, 'Introduction: Feminism, Sisterhood and Other Foreign Relations' in *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood* edited by Oyeronke Oyewumi. Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press.
- Ramanujan, A. (2006). *Talking to God in the Mother Tongue*.
- Shohat, Ella. (1992) Notes on the 'post-colonial'. *Social Text*.
- Springfield, C. L. (1997). *Daughters of Caliban: Caribbean Women in the Twentieth Century*. In *Google Books*. Indiana University Press.
- Stake, Robert E. (2019) "The Art of Case Study Research." *SAGE Publications Inc*.
- Tharu, Susie and K. Lalita (eds) 1991, *Women Writing in India Volume I: 600 B.C to the Early Twentieth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tlostanova, & Mignolo. (2012). *Learning to unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas* (Rodriguez, Ed.).

Walsh, Catherine E., and Walter D. Mignolo. (2018) *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton University Press.

Scientific articles

Adams, Backer-Cantarino, Breazeale, Buettner, & Collins. (1994). Back Matter. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 20(1), 236–244.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/signs.20.1.3174946>

Allen, M. (2011). Violence and voice: using a feminist constructivist grounded theory to explore women's resistance to abuse. *Qualitative Research*, 11(1), 23–45.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794110384452>

Ballestrin, L. (2016). Decolonial Feminism: a critical debate - Presentation at LASA 2016.

Www.academia.edu. Retrieved from

https://www.academia.edu/30580558/Decolonial_Feminism_a_critical_debate_Presentation_at_LASA_2016

Bhabra, Gurinder K. (2014) Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues. *Postcolonial Studies* 17 (2), pp. 115–121.

Bulbeck, C. (2016). The “Space Between” or Why Does the Gap between “Us” and “Them” Look Like an Unbridgeable Chasm?. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 6(3), 36–64.

<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2000.11665885>

Carastathis, A. (2014). (PDF) The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory.

Philosophy Compass. Research Gate. Retrieved from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263725959_The_Concept_of_Intersectionality_in_Feminist_Theory

Castaing A., “Thinking the Difference: On Feminism and Postcolony [review essay]”, *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* [Online], Book Reviews, Online since 18 February 2014, connection on 22 October 2021. URL:

<http://journals.openedition.org/samaj/3689>

Charmaz, K. (2009). Shifting the grounds: Constructivist grounded theory methods. In J. M. Morse, P. N. Stern, J. M. Corbin, B. Bowers & A. E. Clarke (eds.) *Developing Grounded Theory: The Second Generation*. Walnut Creek, CA: University of Arizona Press.

Chowdhuri, R. (2012). A Search for Feminist Roots. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47(41), 31–34. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41720241>

Chun Tie, Y., Birks, M., & Francis, K. (2019). Grounded theory research: A design framework for novice researchers. *SAGE Open Medicine*, 7, 205031211882292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050312118822927>

Collins, P. H. (1986). Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of black feminist thought. *Social Problems*, 33(6), s14–s32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/800672>

Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. In *Google Books*. Psychology Press. Retrieved from https://books.google.ch/books/about/Black_Feminist_Thought.html?id=cdtYsU3zR14C&redir_esc=y

Cott, N. F. (1989). What’s in a Name? The Limits of “Social Feminism;” or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women’s History. *The Journal of American History*, 76(3), 809. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2936422>

- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299.
doi:10.2307/1229039
- Dechaufour, L. (2008). Introduction au féminisme postcolonial [1]. *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, vol. 27(2), 99-110. <https://doi.org/10.3917/nqf.272.0099>
- Deckha, M. (2008). Intersectionality and Posthumanist Visions of Equality. *Wisconsin Journal of Law, Gender and Society*, 23, 249. Retrieved from <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/wiswo23&div=15&id=&page=>
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building Theories from Case Study Research. *The Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532–550. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258557>
- Espinosa Miñoso, Y. (2016). On why a decolonial feminism is necessary: differentiation, co-constitutive domination of the modern west and the end of identity politics. *Solar / Año*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.20939/solar.2016.12.0109>
- Gilgun, J. F. (2008). Lived experience, reflexivity, and research on perpetrators of interpersonal violence. *Qualitative Social Work*, 7(2), 181–197.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325008089629>
- Goodkind, S., Kim, M. E., Zelnick, J. R., Bay-Cheng, L. Y., Beltrán, R., Diaz, M., ... Walton, Q. L. (2021). Critical Feminisms: Principles and Practices for Feminist Inquiry in Social Work. *Affilia - Journal of Women and Social Work*, 36(4), 481–487.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/08861099211043166>
- Grande, S. (2003). Whitestream feminism and the colonialist project: a review of contemporary feminist pedagogy and praxis. *Department of Education Connecticut College*, 53(3).

- Greenwood, R. M. (2008). Intersectional Political Consciousness: Appreciation for Intragroup Differences and Solidarity in Diverse Groups. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 32(1), 36–47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00405.x>
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>
- Henwood, K., & Pidgeon, N. (1995). Remaking the Link: Qualitative Research and Feminist Standpoint Theory. *Feminism & Psychology*, 5(1), 7–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353595051003>
- Kaplan, G. (1992). Contemporary Western European Feminism. New York: New York University Press. *Central European History*, 25(3), 373–375. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0008938900022275>
- Levers, Merry-Jo D. (2013) “Philosophical Paradigms, Grounded Theory, and Perspectives on Emergence.” *SAGE Open*, vol. 3, no. 4, Nov. p. 215.
- Lugones, M. (2007). Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System.
- Lugones, M. (2010). Toward a Decolonial Feminism. *Hypatia*, 25(4), 742–759. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40928654>
- Lugones, Maria. 2008. Colonialidad y género. *Tabula Rasa* 9: 73–101.
- Maitrayee Chaudhuri, *Gender and Advertisements: The Rhetoric of Globalisation*, Women`s Studies International Forum 2001 Vol. 24 No3/4 pp. 373-385 Reprinted in Joseph Turow and Matthew McAllister *The Advertising and Consumer Culture Reader* (Routledge 2009) Ch.11.
- Manning, D. J. (2021). Decolonial Feminist Theory: Embracing the Gendered Colonial Difference in Management and Organisation Studies. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 28(4). <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12673>

- Mayblin, L. (2013) Never Look Back: Political Thought and the Abolition of Slavery, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26:1, 93-110
- McCall, L. (2005). The Complexity of Intersectionality. *Signs - the University of Chicago Press*, 30(3), pp. 1771-1800. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1086/426800>
- Mignolo, W., & Tlostanova, M. (2012). Learning to unlearn: Decolonial reflections from Eurasia and the Americas. In *www.academia.edu*. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/2052401/Learning_to_unlearn_Decolonial_reflections_from_Eurasia_and_the_Americas
- Mignolo, W. D., & Tlostanova, M. V. (2006). Theorizing from the Borders. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(2), 205–221. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063333>
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2020). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Feminist Review*, 30, 61–88.
- Nash, J. C. (2008). re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review*, 89(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2008.4>
- Pandey, S. M., & Zide, N. (1965). Mīrābāī and Her Contributions to the Bhakti Movement. *History of Religions*, 5(1), 54–73. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1061803>
- Prins, B. (1995). The Ethics of Hybrid Subjects: Feminist Constructivism According to Donna Haraway. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 20(3), 352–367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016224399502000305>
- Probst, B. (2015). The eye regards itself: Benefits and challenges of reflexivity in qualitative social work research. *Social Work Research*, 39(1), 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svu028>

- Quijano, Aníbal. (2000) Coloniality of power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America. *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1 (3), pp. 201–580.
- Rankin, C. T. (2009). Engaging Theories in Interpersonal Communication: Multiple Perspectives. *Journal of Communication*, 59(4), E28–E29.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01467.x>
- Runyan, A. S. (2018). Decolonizing knowledges in feminist world politics. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 20(1), 3. Retrieved from
https://www.academia.edu/60329561/Decolonizing_knowledges_in_feminist_world_politics
- Russell, Kathryn (2007). ‘Feminist Dialectics and Marxist Theory.’ *Radical Philosophy Review* 10.1 : 33–54
- Smart, C. (2009). Shifting horizons: Reflections on qualitative methods. *Feminist Theory*, 10(3), 295–308. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700109343253>
- Spivak, G. C. (1985) Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography. In: Guha, R. & Spivak, G. C. eds. *Selected Subaltern Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Spivak, G. C. (1999) *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Tawa Lama-Rewal, S. (2004). Women in India. *Travail, Genre et Sociétés*, 12(2), p. 263 to 268.
- Vorster, J.-A., & Quinn, L. (2017). The “Decolonial Turn”: What Does It Mean for Academic Staff Development?. *University of Johannesburg and Unisa Press*, 21(1).
<https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/1947-9417/2017/853>
- Walsh, V. (n.d.). *Postcolonialism and Human Rights: An Ethical Universal*.
[Www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu). Retrieved from

https://www.academia.edu/6250207/Postcolonialism_and_Human_Rights_An_Ethical_Universal

Yin, Robert K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Electronic resources

References

Badran, M. (n.d.). *Islamic Feminism: What's in a Name?* - The Feminist eZine. Retrieved from www.feministezine.com website:

<http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/international/Islamic-Feminism-01.html>

Be Badass India. (n.d.). Home • Bebadass.in. Retrieved from www.bebadass.in website:

www.bebadass.in

Bhattacharjee, D. (2020, January 31). *Hinduism and Women: Glimpses from a Feminist Perspective*. Retrieved from Welsh Women's Aid website:

<https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/2020/01/hinduism-and-women-glimpses-from-a-feminist-perspective/>

Bouteldja, H., & PIR. (2020, March 4). *Défaire l'universalité du féminisme blanc : patriarcat et masculinités subalternes*. Retrieved December 3, 2020, from Indigènes de la

République website: <http://indigenes-republique.fr/defaire-luniversalite-du-feminisme-blanc-patriarcat-et-masculinites-subalternes/>

Carte blanche Collectif féministe Kahina. (2019, March 28). *Pour un féminisme antiraciste et décolonial*. *La Vif*. Retrieved from <https://www.levif.be/actualite/belgique/pour-un-feminisme-antiraciste-et-decolonial/article-opinion-1113791.html>

Denis, C. (1997). *We are not you: First Nations and canadian modernity*. Toronto: Broadview Press.

Essoussi, C. (2019, March 12). *Decolonial feminism: what, why and how*. Retrieved January 11, 2022, from Borderlands website:

<https://chaimaeessousi.wixsite.com/borderlands/post/decolonial-feminism-what-why-and-how>

Ghosh, S. (2005). In *Democratiya magazine* [Review of *Feminism in India*, by M. Chaudhuri]. 359 pp. Retrieved from

https://www.dissentmagazine.org/democratiya_article/feminism-in-india

International Association for Political Science students. (2021). War, feminism and women's liberation: Misuse of women's rights to legitimize military intervention. Retrieved from iapss.org website: <https://www.iapss.org/2017/10/01/war-feminism-and-womens-liberation-misuse-of-womens-rights-to-legitimize-military-intervention/>

Kumar, A. (2020a, May 15). India's Demography: Unity in diversity. Retrieved July 31, 2022, from IndBiz | Economic Diplomacy Division website:

<https://indbiz.gov.in/indias-demography-unity-in-diversity/>

Kumar, A. (2020b, May 15). India's Demography: Unity in diversity. Retrieved from IndBiz | Economic Diplomacy Division website: <https://indbiz.gov.in/indias-demography-unity-in-diversity/>

Manzoor-Khan, S. (2016, November 8). Decolonising Feminism. Retrieved December 2, 2020, from The Brown Hijabi website:

<https://thebrownhijabi.com/2016/11/08/decolonising-feminism/>

Manzoor-Khan, S. (n.d.). Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan. Retrieved November 2, 2021, from Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan website: <https://www.suhaiymah.com/>

Mayblin, L. (n.d.). Sanctioned Ignorance. Retrieved from GLOBAL SOCIAL THEORY website: <https://globalsocialtheory.org/concepts/sanctioned-ignorance/>

MV, A. (2018, July 17). Watch: Dr. Ruth Manorama On International Dalit Women Solidarity. Retrieved December 3, 2020, from Feminism In India website:

<https://feminisminindia.com/2018/07/18/ruth-manorama-international-dalit-women-solidarity/>

Naidu, V. (2018). Why the Indian family is a great institution. Retrieved from @businessline website: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/why-the-indian-family-is-a-great-institution-ep/article23884420.ece>

paristheotherway. (n.d.). Life of a Desi feminist in the UK: in-between a cultural clash | Paris the other way. Retrieved from www.paristheotherway.com website: <https://www.paristheotherway.com/life-of-a-desi-feminist-in-the-uk-in-between-a-cultural-clash>

Pretty Progressive. (2020, September 2). What Is Feminist Standpoint Theory? Retrieved December 1, 2020, from Pretty Progressive website: <https://www.prettyprogressive.com/what-is-feminist-standpoint-theory/>

Ramaswamy, V. (1996). Rebels, Mystics or Housewives Women in Virasaivism - Vijaya Ramaswamy | PDF. Retrieved July 31, 2022, from Scribd website: <https://fr.scribd.com/document/546896316/Rebels-Mystics-or-Housewives-Women-in-Virasaivism-Vijaya-Ramaswamy>

Rao, S. (2016, October 13). India before the British Conquest. Retrieved from IndiaFacts website: <https://indiafacts.org/india-british-conquest/>

Rashmi Nair. (2020, October 29). Intersectionality Is Key For A Strong Feminist Movement. Retrieved December 3, 2020, from Feminism In India website: <https://feminisminindia.com/2020/10/30/intersectionality-key-strong-feminist-movement/>

Rogers, A. B., & Ulfsdotter, B. (2019, May 23). In Conversation with Aparna Sharma: Feminist and Decolonial Documentary Practices in NorthEast India. Retrieved April 13, 2022, from MAI: Feminism & Visual Culture website:

<https://maifeminism.com/in-conversation-with-aparna-sharma-feminist-and-decolonial-documentary-practices-in-northern-india/>

Roy, A. (2004). *Receiving the 2004 Sydney Peace prize*. Retrieved from

<https://sydneypeacefoundation.org.au/peace-prize-recipient/2004-arundhati-roy/>

Sanchari, P. (2016, December 14). *Feminism Through the Ages in India: An Empowering Journey*. Retrieved April 14, 2019, from The Better India website:

<https://www.thebetterindia.com/69782/feminism-through-the-ages-in-india/>

Sara Hussain. (2017). *A Desi Feminist Podcast For The Not-So-Sanskaari Brown Girls*.

Retrieved from homegrown.co.in website: <https://homegrown.co.in/article/801368/a-desi-feminist-podcast-for-the-not-so-sanskaari-brown-girls>

Schulte, Elizabeth. 2001. *Media ignores the brutal record of the Northern Alliance: Is the U.S. fighting for women's liberation?* *Socialistworker.org*. Available at:

http://socialistworker.org/2001/386/386_08_WomensLiberation.shtml.

Shashi Tharoor. (2007a, August 14). *Shashi Tharoor: Indian identity is forged in diversity. Every one of us is in a minority*. Retrieved from the Guardian website:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/aug/15/comment.india>

Shashi Tharoor. (2007b, August 14). *Shashi Tharoor: Indian identity is forged in diversity. Every one of us is in a minority*. Retrieved from the Guardian website:

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/aug/15/comment.india>

SMCSchannel. (2016). *An interview with Sandhya Nare Pawar [YouTube Video]*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=et2jDkdIGdQ>

Steinmetz, K. (2020, February 20). *She Coined the Term "Intersectionality" Over 30 Years Ago. Here's What It Means to Her Today*. Retrieved from Time website:

<https://time.com/5786710/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality/>

Thaosen, M. (2017, April 2). The Bhakti Movement and Roots of Indian Feminism.

Retrieved from Feminism In India website:

<https://feminisminindia.com/2017/04/03/bhakti-movement-women/>

Tsang, M. (2021, January 21). Decolonial? Postcolonial? What does it mean to “decolonise ourselves”? – Decolonising Modern Languages and Cultures. Retrieved from School of Modern Languages, Newcastle University website:

<https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/decolonisesml/2021/01/21/decolonial-postcolonial-what-does-it-mean-to-decolonise-ourselves/>

UNICEF. (n.d.). Education. Retrieved from www.unicef.org website:

<https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/education>

UN Women. (2020, July 1). Intersectional feminism: what it means and why it matters right now. Retrieved from UN Women website:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/6/explainer-intersectional-feminism-what-it-means-and-why-it-matters>

VERVE Team. (2018, January 27). What is Postcolonial Feminism? Retrieved from Medium website: <https://medium.com/verve-up/what-is-postcolonial-feminism-de3391325407>

Villanueva, P. (2019, February 4). Why Decolonial Feminism: New Possibilities from Abya Yala. Retrieved from Toward Freedom website:

<https://towardfreedom.org/story/archives/women/why-decolonial-feminism-new-possibilities-from-abya-yala/>

V, V. (2020, December 2). WESTERN FEMINISM & ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY.

Retrieved June 14, 2022, from Faces of Feminism website:

<https://facesofeminism.org/2020/12/01/western-feminism-its-impact-on-society/>

Writer, G. (2020, October 8). Why We Need An Intersectional Feminist Approach To Therapy. Retrieved December 3, 2020, from Feminism In India website:
<https://feminisminindia.com/2020/10/09/intersectional-feminist-approach-therapy/>

Master & PhD thesis

Bampatzimopoulou, P. (2020). Feminist Commons. Decoloniality, Intersectionality and the Commons. In *www.academia.edu*.
https://www.academia.edu/44889435/Feminist_Commons_Decoloniality_Intersectionality_and_the_Commons

Wex, B. (2008). Decolonizing Feminism [PhD Thesis, Political Science & International Studies]. In *PhD Thesis, Political Science & International Studies, The University of Queensland*.

Annex 1: photos taken by researcher of the student mobilization that took place at UAHU.



Annex 2: interview questions.

1. Introduction, context. Tell me a bit about yourself. Initial conversation.
2. What does feminism mean to you?
3. What place does feminism have in your culture or religion?
4. How is feminism viewed in your country?
5. Do you think there is a link between colonialism and feminism?
6. Would you like to add anything or clarify anything?

Annex 3: Informed Consent Form.

[Informed Consent Form for _____]

This informed consent form is for individuals over 18 and under 40 of Indian nationality and living in India, who we are inviting to participate in this research regarding feminism in India.

[Name of Principle Investigator: Caroline Franzen] [UCL] [Decolonizing feminism: a critical feminist perspective]

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

You will be given a full copy.

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I am Caroline Franzen, this research is part of my final thesis for my Master in Political Science International Relations with the Université Catholique de Louvain. I am doing research on feminism in India. The specific case study will not be revealed to you before you participate. I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in the research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research, and are welcome to ask me any question. We can organize another time to call later on.

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask as you go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them.

Purpose of the research

For the purpose of the research, the term women will include all person who identify themselves as a woman.

I want to learn about how you feel about feminism, what it is to you and what it means in your cultural context.

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve an interview. Due to the geographical distance, you will answer the interview via video call.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. You can choose not to participate. Please note the answers will be completely anonymous.

You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

Procedures

We are inviting you to take part in this research project. If you accept, you will be asked to participate in an interview.

For the interview, it will take place by video call. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and the interviewer will move on to the next question. No one else but the interviewer will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. I will be taking notes during the course of the interview, and the information recorded is confidential, no one else except myself will access to the information documented during your interview. The notes of the interview will not identify anyone by name. The transcript will be kept saved on a special file on my computer. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else except myself will have access to it. The information will be deleted after being retranscribed.

Risks

You do not have to answer any question or take part in interview if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about feminism in India.

Confidentiality

The research being done online, it will not draw attention. We will not be sharing information about you to anyone outside of the research team. The information that we collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have a letter on it instead of your name. Only the researchers will know what your letter is.

Sharing the Results

The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you when it is finalized. You will receive the finalized thesis after submission to the university, and a summary of the results.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so. You may stop participating at any time that you wish. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview to review your remarks, and you can ask to modify or remove portions of those, if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them at any time. You may contact me at: carolinefranzen14065@gmail.com.

You can ask me any more questions about any part of the research study, if you wish to.

Part II: Certificate of Consent

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Statement by the person taking consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands:

1. The participation is voluntary and anonymous.
2. The research is about Feminism.
3. You will be asked to take part in an interview via video call.
4. There is no obligation to answer all the questions.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Name of Participant _____

Signature _____

Date _____

D/m/y

Annex 4: Example of coded analysis.

Themes

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Freedom | Choice/ decision-making | Diversity |
| Education (cultural or academic) | Relation between feminism and culture | Empowerment |
| Importance of the joint family system | | |

What does feminism mean to you?

Feminism for me is first of all the freedom of choice, the ability to choose, for my life, myself, my family and my body, irrespective of who I am or what part of society I belong to. Feminism should be equally applied to all of the very diverse Indian society rather than just for the luckier ones who get to have more access to education.

What place does feminism have in your culture or religion?

Religion and culture are very different things in India. India is so diverse so I will look at it in the broader sense of the idea. We are a rather patriarchal society, the role of men over the years has been defined as the head of society, as someone who makes the decisions for the family. But there are some ancient cultures within this where women take a very active part of society, in the south there are some parts where the family name comes from the women, the property is given by heritage through the women of the family, the first-born girl child. India is so diverse and has feminist values in some parts, places where you could find women playing a very dominant role of decision makers. Over the years, freedom of women came in the forefront and has enabled and empower women to come out. There are multiple stories that you would hear from everyday life, people from the lower part of society and not culturally educated as they did not have the possibility to do so, they have been empowered enough to make crucial decisions in their life, about marriage, kick their husbands out, get their drunk husbands arrested by the cops and into rehab. College educated women sometimes find themselves not empowered to make their choices whether these choices are related to their career, what gives them happiness to do and break out of the strong

patriarchal rules and pressure that exist within the family. This choice can also be within the family, that is choosing to raise their children away from patriarchal expectations.

Does feminism exist? Yes! Is it prevalent? Probably not. But it is very tough to generalize it.

How is feminism viewed in your country?

We must remember here that we cannot generalize India, it is way too diverse.

Feminism is not understood in the way it should be, it tends to be seen by the middle class and the lower middle class, by families where patriarchy is very prevalent as women becoming aggressive and fighting for what is right to be theirs rightfully. This tends to give a negative connotation to the idea.

In a very subtle form it has always existed, even in the older times the women were pretty much the rulers of their homes. Their choice was not given to step out but within the area in which they operated they had the freedom to do as they pleased and make choices that needs to be made.

Among young educated men there's an understanding that feminism is the freedom to choose for herself, what she wants. Doesn't mean feminists has to work or climb the ladder of success, if she does not want to, she should do as she pleases. For her life, whether to have a child or not, have sex or not, choose to work or be a stay-at-home mom, look after children or not (responsibility jointly shared by the partners whoever that may be).

There's a perceptible change in the way we look et what feminism is. Has it been in every level of society? No.

The helpers who come to my house doesn't know what the word means but when it comes to the practical side of it, the life she has led and the choices she has made, it is engrained, she is empowered to make choices, and she stands by them. Did she study it at school? No. but she's old enough to stand up and say I don't care what you think and she has support in other women friends who live around her, or in extended families. She's not an educated woman, and yet, without putting a word to it she is a feminist.

In our society we cannot know what other women want, we are so diverse, each woman from different parts of society might want something else entirely.

Do you think there is a link between colonialism and feminism?

I guess in some way there must be as colonialism has deeply impacted our country, as many other countries, and a lot of it now has negative consequences, but I couldn't really have more of an opinion about it without thinking more.

