

**Tibetan Buddhism and Feminism in an In-between Space:  
A Creative-Critical Autoethnography in a Non-Western  
Woman's Voice**

---

Sharin Shajahan Naomi

**Student ID: 32114843**

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University

30<sup>th</sup> June, 2017

*This page intentionally left blank*

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work,  
which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

.....

Sharin Shajahan Naomi

*This page intentionally left blank*

*This page intentionally left blank*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I always wanted to do PhD. on a subject with which I would find a spontaneous connection. I believe in the power of prayer. It is through the earnest prayer I am able to create intimate bonding with the divine, which is unseen and incomprehensible, yet the most intimate, the most understanding, and the kindest friend. God's guidance and help come in simple ways; through friends, mentors and unknown strangers from whom I never expect help. That is the grace and beauty of trusting God and asking for his/her help. When I finally decided to do a PhD on Tibetan Buddhism and feminism, the help and guidance I received were incredible and beyond expectations. I am confused about where to start and whose name should appear first in my acknowledgment. Let's go back to 2010 when I received an Australian Leadership Award and began a new life in Western Australia. I was studying for a Masters of Arts in Human Rights and it was at that time I began to dream of doing a PhD. My lecturers, Dr Caroline Fleay, Dr Karen Soldatic, Dr Kathryn Choules (Kathryn was working at the centre at that time) from the Centre for Human Rights Education at Curtin University and my Master's supervisor, Dr Ann Schilo from the School of Design and Arts at Curtin University filled me with courage, inspiration and gave their help in applying for a PhD. I would also like to mention the staff of the international office at Curtin University who assisted me to apply for PhD at Murdoch University. I was impressed by the staff in the international office at Murdoch University who sent the research proposal to the Dean of School of Social Sciences and put me in contact with my second supervisor Dr Mark Jennings. Thanks Mark for all your support for this thesis. I cannot express how grateful I am to Dr Kathryn Choules who was the greatest helpmate in finding my principal supervisor Dr Nado Aveling from the School of Education at Murdoch University. I have thanked Kathryn many times,

and will thank her again for introducing me to Dr Nado. I was very fortunate to have a supervisor like Nado who helped me to learn and grow in my own way with full respect to my independence and individual creativity, while at the same time guiding me in this challenging path. It was my pleasure to have guidance from such a wise woman. The most risky part of this thesis is an alternative way of producing knowledge and creating a different narrative as resistance against Western hegemonic knowledge. I acknowledge and remember all the academic scholars and friends who have worked in this area, given courage and paved the way to write in an unorthodox way. I was lucky to have a wonderful community in the School of Education at Murdoch University comprising of PhD students and the staff. I am very thankful to this community for their help and bonding in this long journey. I love you all and you are in my heart. On this occasion, I would also like to give thanks to Kayo Miyamoto, Dale Banks and other staff of Murdoch University who have helped me in many ways. I am also thankful to Dr Caroline, Dr Baden Offord, and Dr Yirga from Curtin University for their help. Thanks to my other friends in Australia: from temples, Satsang, other spiritual communities, Curtin University, Murdoch university, and the Murdoch university dormitory where I stayed for more than three years. You all have been so kind and good to me. I would like to thank Dr Chris Hougans, Dean Laslett and Rizwana for the help and support they have given. I would like to give special thanks to Yan Zhang and Minnerva. Yan offered her home when I arrived in Australia for a PhD and Minnerva offered her lovely flat when I was about to leave Australia. These times were very critical and the help was generous. I am grateful to my parents, brother and other family members, friends, and colleagues of BRAC who have inspired me to take this long journey and did their best to help me. I can never forget the help I received from my friends in Bangladesh and outside Bangladesh in securing the “Australian Leadership Award 2010” for the Master’s degree which paved the way for the PhD. Thanks to

AusAid for giving me such a wonderful scope. My gratitude always goes for the scholarship that I received from Murdoch University to pursue this PhD. Lastly, my heartfelt gratitude goes to my Gurus and teachers, and spiritual friends who have been my inspiration and strength. Without their blessings and prayer, I would not have come this far. The special person who does not know how much strength he gives me in my daily life is H.H the Dalai Lama. My little work is dedicated to his values and struggles to bring peace and harmony in this world. May whoever read my work think of a non-sectarian world where religion will become a source of love and unity, not an instrument to divide humanity.



*This page intentionally left blank*

## ABSTRACT

As a religion and spiritual practice, Tibetan Buddhism is focused on training the mind to achieve inner tranquility, peace, and compassion. On the other hand, the feminist goal is to liberate women from patriarchal oppression. The possibility for exploring new feminist experiences through Tibetan Buddhist practice calls for a deeper conversation between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism on the basis of real life experiences, heterogeneity, particularity, differences and human conditions. The existing scholarly conversation between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism tends to be grounded in the perspective of Western women. Non-Western women like me have remained almost silent in expressing their reality through feminist-Buddhist lenses. My thesis presents the voice, representations, and experience of a non-Western woman through a creative-critical autoethnography. As a non-Western woman I found that without an epistemic disobedience to colonial aspects of knowledge I cannot speak in the academic area where Eurocentric and masculine approaches dominate in producing knowledge. Taking an arts-based and bricolage approach, I have expressed an epistemic disobedience to this hegemony through performative uses of images, story telling, archetypes, “fictocriticism”, and performative writing. Through this alternative paths, I explored how Tibetan Buddhism and feminism interact in an in-between space where the categories, binaries, cultural dichotomy and identities become fluid and non-dual. This is a space of multiplicity and ambivalence, a space that cannot be completely captured or defined; but can be demonstrated, articulated and interpreted. This in-between space gives birth to more open-ended questions, thoughts and possibilities for an enriched ongoing conversation between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism.

*This page intentionally left blank*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOWARDS A CONVERSATION.....	14
“TIBETAN BUDDHISM”: THE NON- HEGEMONIC GAZE .....	43
IN SEARCH OF DEEPER CONVERSATION BETWEEN TIBETAN BUDDHISM AND FEMINISM .....	77
THE ART OF SEEING .....	106
4.1. Multivocality and the Dialogic Space .....	112
4.2. “Method of Madness” .....	129
4.3. Quest for the Alternative Pathways .....	137
FEMINISM AND TIBETAN BUDDHISM IN AN IN-BETWEEN SPACE .....	173
STORIES WITHIN THE STORY.....	228
6:1. Myths, Archetypes, Metaphors and Our Story .....	231
6:2. The Story of an Ordinary Woman .....	253
CALLIGRAPHY IN ONE STROKE .....	307
References .....	340

*This page intentionally left blank*

# CHAPTER 1

## TOWARDS A CONVERSATION

### Prologue

Laurel Richardson argues, ‘no matter how we stage the text, we – the authors – are doing the staging’ (1992, p. 131). The postmodern, poststructural and postcolonial schools of thoughts always investigate this backstage story through exploring self and subjectivity, positions and epistemic locations of the authors and contexts (Richardson, 2004; Woldeyes, 2017). My views on Tibetan Buddhism and feminism were shaped in part by me having experiences as a feminist and non-Western woman who lived a life in an in-between space of culture, countries and religions. I was not born Buddhist. Tibetan Buddhism drew my attention when I was in my mid 20s, having a personal crisis and looking for a different meaning of life. Little did I realize that I was inventing a “Buddhism” shaped and reshaped by my situations, position, creativity, imagination and freedom of choice, and more importantly my in-betweenness of cultures, countries and religions. I was having creative negotiations with the institutions, traditions, cultures as well as western and feminist values. Buddhism influenced my feminist worldview, and vice versa. They encounter, interact and co-mingle in such a way that their boundaries became amorphous and indeterminate. Their organic conversation began to unfold in an in-between space where categories and binaries diffuse in an ambivalent way. Since the West has met Tibetan Buddhism or in the language of

some critiques<sup>1</sup> that say the West has discovered “Buddhism” as the orientalist object of their study, there have been rigorous scholarly attempts to understand Tibetan Buddhism under the category of religion, philosophy or psychology as well as to link Western disciplines such as feminism with Tibetan Buddhism. My preliminary readings on feminism and Tibetan Buddhism reveal a reciprocity between “Tibetan Buddhism” and feminism when their paradigms are crossed. As renowned feminist academic and Buddhist teacher Ann Klein (1995) said, ‘although feminism focuses on gender, Buddhism does not address this issue in that way. In this case, the partnership between feminism and Buddhist ideas and practices can bring a new feminist experience’ (p.192). In terms of theoretical tenets, the question of gender equality and historical lives of women in Tibet, feminist works on Tibetan Buddhism are enriched. However, when it comes to the question of non-Western womens’ voices and narratives and the post modern turn which aims at developing reflexive, interpretive, creative, dialogic and narrative approaches in research to capture that dynamic particularity, academic works on Tibetan Buddhism and Feminism is hard to notice. To reveal the voice, language and subjectivity of differences and embodied reality and thus enriching the conversation between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism, I found autoethnography’s immense potential for unlocking non-Western female voices. The pedagogy of autoethnography in a time of challenging conventionality and objectivity is deeply grounded in critical cultural politics to decolonize the ideological and theoretical process of hegemony, multiplying and complicating subjects and objects, spaces of inquiry and sites of interrogation (King, 2006, p. 384). The life experience of a non-Western woman embedded in the context of the ‘messy, chaotic, embodied realities of life’ offers the unpredictable intricacies of the interaction between Buddhist practice and feminist views (Felski, 2000, p. 94). A conventional, structured methodology grounded in

---

<sup>1</sup>(Lopez, 1995)

Western chronological and instrumental thinking is not enough to accommodate the fluidity and complexity of a subject in relation to the crisis of representation of our time. For that, we require an alternative epistemology, pedagogy, and politics of knowledge as well as a method to express an epistemic disobedience to oppressive forces like Eurocentric and masculinist epistemologies that prioritize hierarchy, objectification, structure and Western modes of clarity (Conquergood, 2002; Denzin, 2009; Diversi & Moreira, 2009; Mignolo, 2009; Rose, 1993, Smith, 1999). As an alternative methodology, bricolaged methodology has the capacity to relate life experiences and multiple perspectives to theories with more nuances, more dynamics and dialogical approaches (Berry, 2006, Lowan-Trudeau, 2012, Rogers, 2012). Through orchestrating a plethora of diverse tasks, bricolaged methodology can de-centre the dominance of Western discourse rooted in Eurocentric epistemology and “masculine” approaches (Steinberg, 2006). My PhD research looks closely at the fluidity and in-betweenness of a non-Western woman’s life in the context of an organic relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and feminism, through developing a highly radical, creative and critical bricolaged methodology. Usually, bricolage is infamous in mainstream academic research due to its creative power of blurring the boundaries and creating uncomfortable disruption (Rogers, 2012; Transken, 2005). However, its creative capacity to weave ‘bits and pieces’ and ‘the scattered parts of theoretical, methodological and interpretive paradigms which overlap each other’ can illicit a fresh perspective in exploring ‘the conflict, tension and complementary tenets between paradigms’ (Steinberg, 2006, p. 119). In this thesis, I would like to utilize this potential in unpacking non-Western narrative and non-hegemonic knowledge. In my thesis, epistemic disobedience is a part of the strategic politics of a non-Western voice. In consequence, this thesis does not conform to a fixed structure. Its epistemology and theoretical underpinnings do not fall under any specific label like “postmodern”, or “postcolonial”. Its



immense inclination towards creativity risks rejection for being too eclectic. This unconventional way is exemplified in the terms like “in-betweenness”, “nomadic”, “everywhere but no where” or “been there and back to nowhere”, or “views from nowhere” (Biemann, 2000; Staples, 1992). After Modernism, all these expressions have been part of a strategic politics to challenge the fixed borders in knowledge, representation and identity (Biemann, 2000; Staples, 1992). This thesis fits into the “non-traditional” research that deviates from standard forms for the political purpose of relating theory to life in an alternative way, and explores the ontological and epistemological views that are distinctive and uncommon in mainstream research (Engels-Schwarzpaul & Peters, 2013). In this thesis, these characteristics are featured through alternative ways of theorizing, creative and performative writing, “fictocriticism”, use of archetypes, story-telling, the concept of ‘feminine’, and an arts-based approach congruent to raising critical consciousness.

Since this thesis is unconventional in nature and contains multiples approaches and perspectives, it is necessary to give an initial understanding of these ideas that will shape the writing, the contours and depth of the ideas in the thesis. In the next sections, I am going to introduce these interwoven ideas with preliminary insights, in order to facilitate an enjoyable reading with much clarity and understanding on the part of the readers.

### **The Womb of This Thesis**

The conversation between feminism and Buddhism has been considered to be ‘one of the most provocative, promising and precarious areas of discussion within the larger cross-cultural dialogue between Eastern and Western philosophies and cultural values’ (Shneiderman, 1999, p. 221).

There are theoretical works, which linked Buddhist concepts to feminist concepts<sup>2</sup>, studies to critically analyze women's equality in monastic institutions<sup>3</sup>, narratives on historical and contemporary women practitioners who attained high spiritual realization, gave teaching and contributed in the development of Buddhism<sup>4</sup> as well as the biographies of Tibetan women in exile<sup>5</sup>. In the paradigms of understanding women's experience in Tibetan Buddhism through narratives, and biographies, two poles are visible – Western women converted to Tibetan Buddhism and became very good teachers, academics, practitioners, and Tibetan and Himalayans women who were born and brought up as Buddhists. If one googles the keyword “Asian woman and Tibetan Buddhism”, the first page will be full of Western women or Tibetan women's links. It should be noted that Tibetan Buddhism has been embraced partially or fully by non-Western women from a heterogeneous cultural and religious background across the globe. While attending teaching sessions, retreats and visiting monasteries, I have met a number of women from non-Western heterogeneous cultural and religious backgrounds including from Africa, Latin America,

---

<sup>2</sup> E.g. (Klein 1995) Klein's works have conjoined the Buddhist concept of emptiness with feminist subjectivity. Gross has shown that Buddhist approach to suffering has the potential to take feminist focus beyond patriarchal oppression (Gross 1986; Gross, 1993 a; Gross, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Works that have empirical data on women's position in the monastic institution of the Himalayas. (Gutschow, 2004; Tsomo, 1999; Tsomo, 2004), contemporary debate on women's full ordination (Mohr & Tsedroen, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Life of women Guru and high practitioner Yeshe tsogyal (Changchub & Nyingpo, 2000), exceptional life of Orgyan Chokyi, a Buddhist nun devoted her whole life in meditation and pilgrimage (Schaeffer, 2004), study on the famous female incarnation line of Tibet (Diemberger, 2007), the autobiographical and biographical writings of one of the few Tibetan Buddhist women Sera Khandro Künzang Dekyong Chönyi Wangmo and her mystical experience (Jacoby, 2014), analysis on the letters between two Buddhist masters, Tāre Lhamo (1938–2002) and Namtrul Rinpoche (1944–2011), and their visions and struggles for reinvigorating Buddhism in Eastern Tibet during the post-Mao era (Gayley, 2016). Allione's collections of pre-modern women Buddhist practitioners in Tibet who were revered for reaching high level of spiritual realizations (Allione, 1984). Hass's work 'The Dakini power', a collection of biographies of extraordinary women practitioners and teachers (Hass, 2013), Biography of Tenzing Palmo, the first Western nun and another famous teachers in the West. (Mackenzie, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> A Hundred Thousand White Stones, the story of Kunsang Dolma who was born in Tibet, spent time as a refugee nun in India, and led a life as an immigrant and new mother in America (Dolma & Denno, 2013).

the Middle East, Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Singapore and China. There is no doubt that Buddhist women including women exploring Tibetan Buddhism are vastly different based on particular contexts and conditions including race, sex, class, and ethnicity (Halafoff, 2013; Tsedroen, 2006; Tsomo, 2008). Shneiderman noticed that non-Western women have ‘remained mute’ in expressing their reality through feminist Buddhist lenses compared to their Western sisters (Shneiderman, 1999, p. 222). In terms of linking feminism and Tibetan Buddhism in the academic field, I agree with her. Not only are non-Western feminist scholar’s insights few in terms of linking feminism to Tibetan Buddhism, but also heterogeneity and particularity of non-Western women’s lives and contexts are overlooked in this paradigm.

Although Tibetan Buddhism’s contemplative practices, philosophy and concepts of feminine divine present great potential for finding new subjectivity for women, Tibetan Buddhism is not beyond patriarchal influence. Like any other religion, Tibetan Buddhism espouses certain views which bear the risks of being used against women. As a woman seeker on the Tibetan Buddhist path, as well as a feminist, I took a great interest in the scholarly dialogue between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism to understand these issues. Besides the scholarly dialogue, another aspect of women’s relationship to Buddhism intrigued me – real life stories of women seekers of Buddhism. The reasons behind this interest are two-fold: I want to connect my experiences with other women’s experiences to find guidance, condolence, and solidarity; and secondly, real life stories can show the practical application of Buddhist teachings, which theories cannot convey due to their different functional aspect of knowledge.

When I started to read the stories of women, I found that each woman’s life represents a unique way of embodying the conversation between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism in a particular time, place and context. Women’s stories show how a woman lived through a particular social and

cultural context in relation to others and society (Riessman, 2001). The stories also liberate women's relation to Buddhist practice only from the metaphysical abstract level. We can understand how the dialogue between feminism and Buddhism is lived through, felt and experienced. The biographical elements in feminist works indicate the immense necessity to hear the real life stories of women to understand the relationship between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism with more openness and nuanced perspectives.

As I indicated before, in terms of the narrative on exploring the relationship between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism, particular groups of women's narratives are evident in terms of Western women and Asian women. Klein's (1995) hope for the possibility for a new feminist experience through Tibetan Buddhist practice calls for a deeper conversation between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism on the basis of real life experiences, heterogeneity, particularity, differences and human conditions. This calling draws our attention to the importance of the non-Western voice and narrative in a deeper way.

What does it mean to be a non-Western voice? How can a non-Western voice emerge without creating another oppositional politics, another boundary of us versus them? From a postcolonial perspective, there are a number of ways to value a non-Western voice in terms of identity, cultural belonging, and subjectivity. However, how one identifies with the highly complex term "non-Western" largely depends on one's situatedness and politics. Hence, on the basis of my background and experience, I invoke the non-Western voice as the voice of difference, a voice and representation that refuses to represent a pure cultural authenticity to create disruptions to the dichotomies between East and West and the hegemony of the discourse and approaches claimed to be "West" (Bhabha, 1994).

In this thesis, I have used “East” and “West” in very broad, fluid and multilayered ways. To me, they are both tangible and intangible with open-ended meanings. However, they are not completely vague in my work. Homi Bhabha and Trinh T. Minh-ha see the boundary between East and West as mobile and transient, as a reality both within and outside (Bhabha, 1994; Minh-ha, 1998). From this fluid perspective, “West” is a space which can be anywhere, just like “East”. By the term “East”, I am interested in the distinctive intellectual traditions (e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen), the context and culture of the Indian sub-continent, China, and Japan, as well as their geopolitical positions. By the term West, I refer to the particular intellectual traditions originated in Western countries (e.g. Modernism, Postmodernism) as well as First-world countries and the privilege of White people. In terms of women’s issues, “Western women” indicate the condition and privileges of White women from first world countries. Western intellectual thought is embedded in the history of Modernism and concepts like essence, binary, scientific rationality, and objectivity. At the same time, there are postmodern schools of thoughts which challenge Modernity and its concepts. Lyotard has observed that metanarratives and the representations/realities dialectic are distinguishing features of Modernism. On the other hand, incredulity towards metanarratives and exploring the “crisis of representation” are major features of the postmodern condition (Hepburn, 1999; Lyotard, 1984; Simons & Billig, 1994). Although I have talked about the difference between East and West, they do not stand in absolute dualistic or binary ways in this thesis. Often, they assume a space which pervades both outside and inside the human world. Thus, the non-Western voice in this thesis rests in the openness of the boundaries between East and West.

I was born and brought up in Bangladesh, which as a part of India was subject to British colonization for hundreds of years. Its education and politics are highly influenced by Western liberal ideas, as well as Bengali culture and Islamic religious values. Like many other middle- class

families, my family had retained the paradoxical lineage of practising traditional Bengali culture, Islamic values, and Western liberal ideas. From childhood, I have had an ambivalent relationship with the West as well as with my own culture. Western liberal ideas attracted me from the very beginning of my life. This interest made me study law which was inherited from British colonial legacy and embedded in Western liberal ideas and Enlightenment approach in the context of the Bangladeshi education system. When I was in Bangladesh, I felt I never belonged there. My thoughts and approaches to life were very radical and incompatible with my surroundings. I thought, perhaps I was like a Westerner. Ironically, when I came to Australia to study, I felt that I was not Western either. Although I knew about Buddhism and other religious traditions on a surface level, I had the opportunity to explore these traditions with more in-depth insight and contemplation in Australia. As a result my interactions and experiences with these Eastern traditions remain culturally blended in the space of in-betweenness.

My spiritual practice made me internalize the interdependence, the oneness of all creations and the non-dual relation between individualism and interconnection. Through a combination of my spiritual as well as feminist training, I started to value diversity and universality of human conditions on an equal footing. From this background, the difference I am talking about is not invoking a sense of otherness in binary and oppositional ways. This difference always implies Trint T Minh-ha's (1991, p. 152) interdependent multifold feminist gestures: that of affirming "I am like you" while pointing insistently to the difference; and that of reminding "I am different" while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at. It is one of the possibilities for the situated knowledge located in an individual's life at a particular time, space and context. Although this possible knowledge is partial and does not see everything from nowhere, it does see some things from somewhere. As a situated knowledge, it can represent an expression of a specific embodiment

(Hartsock, 1990, p. 28-29). This knowledge can acknowledge the difference that happens due to particular complex interconnections and intersections among race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality as well as ‘the desire, motivation and fear of’ human beings (Bhavnani & Talcott, 2012, p. 137). These interconnections and intricacies talk about ‘more fluidity and more movement’ with a feminist commitment to justice (Bhavnani & Talcott, 2012, p. 137).

When Tibetan Buddhism and feminism meet each other in my life, the in-betweenness is heightened to a new level. If I would stand in a feminist paradigm, I would find myself analysing feminist issues from a Buddhist perspective; and if I would step into a Buddhist paradigm, I tend to judge everything from a feminist angle. Gradually feminism and Tibetan Buddhism merged in my life in such a way that their lines of demarcation became extremely blurred. One of the renowned feminist scholars, Rita Gross (1999, p. 1) has explained the mingling of these two tenets as:

So maybe the metaphor for Buddhism and feminism is not exactly water poured into water, but colored water poured into water of another colour. Each colour is transformed, each is changed by the other. When you pour Buddhism and feminism into the same vessel, each is transformed in ways that are helpful and positive for the other. It’s not that Buddhism needs to be “fixed” by feminism, or that feminism needs to be “fixed” by Buddhism. Both are true.

The more I started to notice this in-betweenness, the more insights I began to get regarding the nuances of social, spiritual and political aspects of women’s lives. In front of this in-betweenness, my binary gaze became unstable, and I ceased to find answers on the basis of previous assumptions and authoritarian tones. The in-betweenness brought spontaneous awe, shock and surprise and I wondered which fertilised the ground for new knowledge to grow. I believe the nature of this in-betweenness is a gateway to understanding women’s experiences from a completely different

perspective. In this multivalent in-between space, categories and dualities become obscure and blurred to challenge hegemonic thinking. This thesis explores this in-between space with the value of ambivalence and subtlety of a woman's real life experience.

### **Birth of an Autoethnography**

In a spiritual seeker's life, knowing the aspects of a spiritual teaching includes practising the teaching in real life events. As a seeker, I have found that the spiritual transformation, no matter how romantic and peaceful it sounds in theory, is not an easy job on the practical level. It is true that Tibetan Buddhist practice provides a centering and grounding of oneself. However, ambivalence, unresolved questions, paradoxes, confusions, and vulnerability of life cannot be completely avoided in the ongoing gradual process of transformation, particularly for beginner practitioners. When it comes to exploring the relationship between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism in real life, the problem of "speaking" and positionality inevitably arise. Can a non-Western ordinary woman, who is to some extent "subaltern", speak within the hegemonic discourse which often turns out to be patriarchal, Eurocentric and masculine to the people at the margin? This question has been raised in different ways by postcolonial and poststructuralist thinkers such as Edward Said, Michael Foucault, Gayatri Spivak, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous. The rigid characteristics of normative academic writing have been subject to critique as writing for approval by a small group of elite and higher authority academics which deliberately overshadows the way that best suits one's experience, language and spontaneous communication (Metta, 2010). Gayatri Spivak (1988) expressed the difficulty of speaking as both a woman and non-Westerner. In both poststructuralist and postcolonial paradigms, the concern for speaking is rooted in the oppressive structure of discourse and the exclusion of the voices of "women, natives and the others". I find in these simple words "women, natives and the others"



Trinh T Minh-ha (1989) concisely described the people at the margins in the field of knowledge production. In the Western intellectual realm, if one is a woman as well as non-Westerner, her sense of otherness is tripled. She is less privileged than her White Western sisters, less fortunate than white Western men, and less advanced than non-Western men. If she wants to speak other than imitating the white Western way, she needs to look for ‘autonomous, geographically, historically, and culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies’ to reclaim the voice and language in writing, through disruptions and disturbances to the web of hegemonic power (Mohanty, 1991, p. 51). Western colonialism is more than history of colonizing land and culture. According to Said (1979) and Mignolo (2009), Western colonial interests in the realm of knowledge production are sustained through hierarchy and superiority of Eurocentric ideas and representation of others. As a result, there are always authoritative efforts for maintaining European intellectual lineages, styles and narratives rooted in Greek and Roman classical ways, and later in the cult of the Enlightenment thinkers like Descartes and Kant (Mignolo, 2009). While critiquing the hegemony of western knowledge, I would like to make it clear that I am certainly not in favour of the abandonment and replacement of western knowledge. I am interested in demystifying the hegemony in much more subtle ways for the evolution of diversity of knowledge of humankind. In challenging western colonial authority, one needs to work on the alternative epistemology, pedagogy, and politics of knowledge production (Conquergood, 2002; Denzin, 2009; Diversi & Moreira, 2009; Smith, 1999). This alternative way can be termed as ‘decolonization of knowledge’, which not only brings forth the stories of the marginalized and subalterns, but also delves beneath – challenging and deconstructing the subtle structure within the discourse, texts and meaning through new praxis, pedagogy, politics, performance and embodied narrative (Denzin, 2003; Denzin, 2009; Diversi & Moreira, 2009). Decolonization of knowledge

inevitably invites an epistemic disobedience to hegemonic structure by encouraging a diversion and rebellion to make space for noncolonizing and non-Western knowledge (Mignolo, 2009). The sign of this epistemic disobedience is the disappointment of the authoritative structure at the falling of the superiority of previous patterns and framework in knowledge making (Jones, 1999).

In search of critical feminist strategies to reveal the voice, language, and subjectivity of difference and embodied reality, I found autoethnographies can address the lack in the ongoing conversation between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism through unlocking non-hegemonic knowledge. In autoethnography, the researcher analyses his or her experience to address the main themes of research and the research question (Ellis et al., 2011). Since the emergence of postmodernism, autoethnography stands as a new location and space for the voice, language and narrative of others, especially of the marginalized and the subalterns who do not have the opportunity to speak in their own ways due to the authority and surveillance of hegemonic power structures (Holt, 2003; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). As a research method, autoethnography can unpack the crisis of representation of this time, the complexities in ‘the interpretation of embodied and intersubjective knowledge’ and multiple aspects of consciousness and self-consciousness that are personally and/or politically emancipatory (Ellis, 2002, p.402). Autoethnography can present a space where speaking from multiplicity, heterogeneity, plurality, and indeterminacy of meaning and meaning-making become possible and visible (Bordo, 1990; Tsalach, 2013). Following Dorothy Smith’s vision, autoethnography can be a useful way to enter into large areas of social and political context through cultivating knowledge on a woman’s experiences (Heyer-Gray, 2001; Smith, 1987).

Choosing autoethnography as the research method inevitably brings some apprehensions regarding its credibility and validity. I will respond to this question with more depth in the chapter ‘Art of Seeing’. For now, I would like to mention that qualitative inquiry in social science and humanities

has experienced a paradigm shift in the last 25 years in applying innovative research methods for questioning the positivist aspect of knowledge based on objectivity and scientific rationality (Taylor & Wallace, 2007). In this changing process, the claim of truth and validity has become partial, localized, and situated (Adams et al., 2015; Beer, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Holt, 2013; Spry, 2011). Writing autoethnography to further this goal is neither an innocent eclecticism nor without consideration of justice (King, 2006).

### **A Complex Sense of Subjectivity in Writing the Autoethnography**

No matter how creatively I pursue alternative ways for producing knowledge beyond patterns and categorizations, I cannot deny the very fact of human's habitual practice of communicating with the ideas through patterns, categorization, and focus (Galín, 2003). Considering this practical aspect, I reviewed my experiences of feminism and Buddhism and began to narrow down the ideas towards a broad theme which could cover the variety of issues that the interaction between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism offers. In the end, I could see the theme which had the capacity and elasticity to hold various issues related to feminism and Tibetan Buddhism altogether – “subjectivity”.

Subjectivity has been central to feminist politics of resistance and liberation, feminist praxis and practice for critical consciousness (Grosz, 2010; Nicholson, 2008). The subjectivity of a feminist Buddhist is made up of centeredness, calmness, peacefulness, and kindness; at the same time, it is aware of contingency, chaos and life conditions (Klein, 1995). It is both spiritual and political, and at some levels, the spiritual and political aspects enmesh without leaving any clear demarcation. In order to unpack this complex subjectivity – a synergy of spiritual, political and social tenets – multiple approaches and theoretical paradigms are required to be woven together. In this venture,

I have delved into the feminist works on Tibetan Buddhism in exploring an alternative spiritual subjectivity, borrowed ideas from transpersonal psychology and perennial philosophy to explain the spiritual experience to an academic audience, and incorporated postcolonial, postmodern and poststructuralist approaches, especially those which are grounded in a feminist consciousness in discovering the nuances among political, social and cultural aspects of life. This “briocolage” travels into multiple theoretical paradigms and dwells on their reciprocity and relationality.

In addressing the spiritual aspects of subjectivity, especially the centering, grounding and awareness aspects of subjectivity, I have stepped into the paradigm of Buddhism and transpersonal psychology. To be honest, spiritual experience is a comparatively new topic in the academic paradigm. From a spiritual seeker’s perspective, if spiritual experience is conveyed through intellectual language and context, it loses its transformative power to a great extent. When spiritual experience is shared in the academic world, language becomes extremely powerful as well as tricky. Many of the terms that are common for spiritual seekers to use for describing spiritual experience can cause unnecessary confusion and misunderstanding in terms of feminist issues. Buddhism, although it deals with spiritual experiences, appears limited in finding words and expressions that might resonate with the spiritual experiences of a feminist seeker. Here comes the importance of transpersonal psychology which studies spiritual and transcendent aspects of human experience, and is very useful in explaining the spiritual experience in relation to Buddhist practice. I have often used “spirituality” and “transpersonal” interchangeably due to their correlation in interpreting the experience. As a spiritual seeker and feminist, I find a synthesis of feminism, Buddhism as well as transpersonal psychology can express the spiritual experience of a woman for academic audiences.

In this thesis, I have explored a highly complex sense of feminist Buddhist subjectivity which touches multiple paradigms including Buddhism, transpersonal psychology and perennial philosophy, and postmodern, poststructuralist and postcolonial feminism. This complex subjectivity has been reflected in writing to challenge the narrative of the Western phallogocentric, unitary and fixed self. Throughout the thesis, I write as “I”, “Naomi”, “Sharin”, as well as “she”, representing and resembling the polyphony, heteroglossia, and dialogic character of multiple voices. Here self is explored as relational, interdependent and transient with a deep touch of compassion and empathy. It is a strategy of opening up a dynamic subjectivity through fragmentation, dislocation and decentering of the unitary coherent self and blurring the binary divisions with others (Bolton, 2014). This strategy explores the multi-folded subjectivity with a force that is ‘heterological or centrifugal as well as unifying or centripetal’, as ‘a kind of an internal dialogue reflecting an intrasubjective engagement with the intersubjective aspect of self, which neither represses difference nor privilege identity’ (Henderson, 2014, p. 74 -75).

### **The Call of “Feminine”, the Call for Creativity**

Feminist politics of resistance and critical consciousness are not only about finding a woman’s voice and experience, but also about textual politics to challenge the patriarchal structure in language (Anderson, 2012; Smith, 1987). If we take into account Foucault’s sharp observation that power and knowledge activate their mutual relationship through hegemonic regulations and rule of discourse, we understand the feminist like Irigaray’s assertion that language for the discourse is always controlled by the White masculine hegemonic power (Crawford, 1995; Foucault, 1990; Irigaray, 2002; Jackson, 2004; Jones 1981, p.248; Litosseliti, 2006; Walsh, 2003). Unlike the openness and flexibility of the libido of the female subject, a phallic signifier, the logos searches for one truth, stable meaning and mastery through the power of language (Gersch, 2013). In

academia, feminism has resisted patriarchy and phallogentrism through the introduction and invention of “feminine language” ingrained in making women’s bodies and emotions heard in language, using poetic and fluid words with a rich blend of personal experiences, and expressing multiple identities including sexual orientation (Hintikka &Hintikka, 1983; Hornsby, 2000). Cixous sees feminine writing as a bisexual writing that challenges hegemonic masculine orthodoxy by confusing it rather than attempting to replace it with another (feminine) orthodoxy (Phillips et al., 2014, p.3). The concept ‘feminine’ is not unproblematic and invokes suspicion of essential projection on women. However, not in all areas of feminism, is feminine’ abandoned due to its limitations. The power of feminine is not about domination and control for superiority. It is a power of love, rapture, nurture and relationship. The potential and possibility of the concept of feminine cannot be ignored because of its spaciousness, fluidity and its power of disrupting the hegemonic power relations through different syntax and meaning making (Needelman, 2013). The feminine way is related to both feminist politics and resistance against colonial White masculine aspects of knowledge. The concept of femininity can bring out a new dimension to understand and interpret reality, life’s questions and journey on the earth. In this thesis, I resort to this ‘problematic but powerful’ site to speak and think with a subjectivity that exists in reality but is marginalized in dominant discourse; that has been the site of celebration and claim to women’s differences in terms of body, texts, principles and perspectives (Jones, 1981, p.252). The feminine way of writing is intuitive, receptive, accommodative, emotional, and has plural and poetic meanings (Kerr & Nettelbeck, 1998). The special feature of this writing is evident in this thesis in the circular perspective of the biographical narrative. ‘This circular perspective is inclusive, encompassing, which can cluster, relational, connected, with no beginning and end, and sharing power’ (Murdock,

1990, p. 173). As a woman, I found this way of writing has been extremely helpful in expressing my emotions and perspectives in giving meaning to the different phases of my life.

The return to femininity as a new embodiment, language, and subjectivity in the area of knowledge production includes using folktales, archetypes, story-telling, and re-writing and re-interpreting the story of the Goddess and mythology (Hall, 1980). The appeal and wisdom of myths and the journey of a hero/heroine cross the barrier of time. As a result, one can connect with these stories with personalized truth and multiple perspectives. With an acknowledgement of the question and complexities which the concept of archetypes inevitably gives rise to, the feminine archetype from folktales, mythologies and fairy tales work in this thesis as two-fold resistance: it diminishes the cult of masculinity in the form of hero for the patriarchal interest, and it explores a new form of feminist subjectivity through women's embodiment in the image of archetypes and Goddess (Cavarero, 1995; Nicholson, 2008, 2011).

Feminine archetypes from ancient mythology have been used to explore feminist subjectivity in a diverse range of experiences that women go through including the most vulnerable phases like domestic violence and depression (Metta, 2015; Remy, 2005). As a woman born and brought up in a society where the divine is devoid of woman's image, I have always felt distanced and excluded from the way the divine has been presented to me by society and religious institutions – either as he or as gender neutral, but never in a woman's image. When I first saw the Goddess's image in the temple, I felt a natural intimacy with the divine. I felt my embodiment was honoured in the all-encompassing vast nature of the divine. The concept of the female Buddha was one of the crucial reasons that made me so drawn to Tibetan Buddhism.

My spiritual inclination towards Goddess's figures was not confined to the metaphysical realm. One of my interests became drawing the archetype Goddess figure of women friends and writing the story which would reflect their life journeys through the journey of the Goddesses. Connecting with Goddess and other female archetypes, women find a new way of valuing their struggle, challenges and quest in life which is extremely powerful, empowering and therapeutic. In this thesis, I have used multiple stories of Goddesses and female archetypes from both East and West. The stories of female archetypes have given a new perspective to a female's embodiment in this life journey and enriched the dynamic aspects of the third space or the in-between space of diffused categories of cultures.

### **“Feminine” Invokes “Fictocriticism”**

The feminine premise backed by poststructuralist approaches to language allows me to write with meaning, syntax, texts and perspectives which are not stable, singular, linear, static and definite. They unfold with multiplicity and open-endedness through disruptions, dialogic interactions, polyphonic characters, intertextuality and in-betweenness, creating asymmetrical relationships between the signified and the signifier. It is a radical departure from the dominant masculine aspect of meaning making through language. This writing is extremely challenging in the realm of hegemonic discourse of the masculine. It bears the high risks being rejected as “vague” and “non-academic”. In my search for a more flexible and accommodative framework to hold this immensely dynamic and rapturous creative impulse, “fictocriticism” came with new potentialities and possibilities. Fictocriticism is a hybrid form of writing with an exquisite characteristic of transgression and capability of blurring the borders between art, social science, fiction and ethnography; between subjectivity and objectivity (Flavell, 2004; Nettelbeck, 1998). Here stories, essays and critiques are merged to provoke new thinking on representation, knowledge and power.



Fictocriticism provides multiple readings and prolific strategies for presenting human experience as both argument and story (Ash, 1996). Although I found a hope in writing through fictocriticism, there was a dilemma in using this highly experimental genre. This dilemma is not so simple to be solved through a conclusive answer. I decided to express this dilemma in the writing as an open-ended conversation, as a conversation of multiple voices and as a conversation with readers. Although the section (Chapter 4) “Method of Madness” shows some form of resolution through negotiation in relation to fictocriticism, the dilemma is present in every chapter of the thesis as polyphony and heteroglossia, in the ways ideas are presented – sometimes in an explicit way and sometimes in implicit style.

### **Creativity Accelerates: Images Speak**

As a challenge to an objective way of writing, there is a growing tendency to involve personalized subjective touch in the research through different textual strategies (Nazaruk, 2012). Following this trend, I make the autoethnography an artistic tool for expression which invokes compassion and empathy in relating to human being’s personal experiences (Custer, 2014; Ellis, 1999). According to Ellis (1999), this is a style of “heartful autoethnography”. As part of this process, the biographical narrative in this thesis is written with the aid of personal photographs and arts. The images respond to the research’s quest for ‘felt, touched and embodied constitutions of knowledge’ through an intimate connection with the past (Noy, 2008; Scarles, 2010, p. 501). Besides personal photographs, I have included surreal arts to express particular phases of my life. The reason for the inclusion of surreal arts lies in their unique ability to question conventional frames and names in understanding complex life experience (Slattery, 2001). The titles I have used for every image cannot be reduced to specify a single meaning (Olson, 2013). Based on poststructuralist approaches to language, the relationship among images, narratives and titles in this thesis are

open-ended and bear polysemic signs where language and sign system are always in the process of indeterminacy, having more than one fixed meaning (Wells, 1997, p. 341). They are continually modified and nuanced in the changing social, political and personal contexts and never reach a stable meaning. In that sense, there is never a closure (Wells, 1997, p. 341).

### **Images and Texts Perform**

Pointing out the limitations of Western epistemology's claim of superiority, Edward Said tells us 'that it is a fallacy to assume that the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which the lives of human beings live can be understood on the basis of what book-text say' (Said, 1979, p. 93). The scholarly politics of challenging colonial authority is embedded in collapsing the dichotomy and categorization in texts and discourse (Denzin, 2003). When the politics transgress text-centrism of Western epistemologies, disciplinary boundaries and fixed categorized meaning, it assumes a performative nature through creative-critical pedagogical articulation (Conquergood, 2002). Performance has been used broadly in scholarly fields to challenge hegemonic normative values and frameworks through invoking a sense of being theatrical and entertaining. In this thesis, I have seen performance as a package of critical imagination, activism, intervention, inquiry, and analysis. It combines play, poetics with power and politics; criticism with creativity and aesthetics, to open up endless questions on history, class, gender, identity, and subjectivity in a prolific way (Denzin, 2003; Madison & Hamera, 2006). I consider 'performance as a scaffolding for thinking, feeling, being and doing in the world that takes storytelling and the social and political lives of stories, as practices engaged in by embodied and sentient beings' (CIE<sup>6</sup>, 2016, para 2 and para 14). It is a process of movement, motion, fluidity, fluctuation, and kinesis of dismantling and

---

<sup>6</sup> Centre for Imaginative Ethnography.

rebuilding, breaking and remaking for transgression and troubling the boundary (Conquergood, 1995). For a researcher like myself who is working in a liminal space and provoking departure from structure, categorization and a specific framework for voice and agency, performance allows ‘threshold-crossing, shape-shifting, and boundary-violating forms that value the carnivalesque over the canonical, the transformative over the normative, the mobile over the monumental’ (Conquergood, 1995, p. 138). Denzin agrees with Conquergood that the performative approach of knowing contributes to epistemological and political pluralism to challenges–existing ways of knowing (Conquergood, 1998; Denzin, 2003).

Through writing the thesis in a way that acts, thinks and makes the reader go beyond linguistic limitations of texts and fixed meaning, I activate the epistemic disobedience to the hegemony in a performative space where possibilities for explorations and reconfiguring the ways that we think about each other and view the world are experienced with open-ended meaning (Goddard, 2007; Musselman & Thompson, 1998; Thiong'o, 1997, p. 1).

The use of images, narratives, mythology and archetypes and the overall style of writing craft a communication in this thesis which values multiple possibilities, transpersonal aspects of human experience and reader’s interpretation (Anderson & Braud, 2011; Langellier, 1999; Nichol, 2009). Connecting readers to the ideas in a way so that they can ‘participate in an interpersonal contact in recognizing oneself in all human complexity’, this strategy becomes Dauglas’s participatory understanding of the politics of performance of resistance for voice and agency where one places oneself in the space of the other (Conquergood, 1998, p. 28; Dauglas, 1969; Pelias, 2014, p. 16). Thus the performative aspect of images and texts work as a personal, political and social praxis of a critical framework that can question the hegemonic cultural construction as well as transcend the constraints of the hidden positivism in knowledge production (Denzin & Lincoln, 2001). The

performative aspect of texts, narrative, images, mythology and archetypes in this autoethnography invokes a ‘whole realm of complex, finely nuanced meaning that is embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, coexperienced, covert and all the more deeply meaningful because of its refusal to be spelled out’ (Conquergood, 2002, p. 146).

### **How to Name This Unconventional Way?**

Initially, I felt a bit uncomfortable about the unusual nature of this research. Although I am not an admirer of categorized ways of thinking, I agree that a creative category can reduce the risk and expectations of conventional academic lenses. The more I explored the rebellious spirit in my research, the more I wished to give it a name. A name which would give the message to the conventional academic world that ‘it is not like the one you expected’, and thus inviting more freedom for diversion and disruption.

Since this research is working in multiple paradigms and strategies, I could simply use the term “bricolage” to address this research which obviously it is. However, I felt that the name “bricolage” is not enough to hold its purposeful diversion for producing knowledge in an alternative way, as “bricolage” can be absolutely committed to invisible conventional academic rules. When I read the book ‘Of Other Thoughts: Non-traditional Approaches to the Doctorate; A Handbook for Candidates and Supervisors’ (Engels-Schwarzpaul & Peters, 2013), the term “non-traditional” research clicked to me! Just like me, the authors of the book undertook arduous journeys to see and interpret the world differently leaving behind the temptation of traditional academic acceptance and applause. Although it is very tricky to define “non-traditional” research, I found there are common characteristics that non-traditional research follows. It challenges established rules of producing knowledge for a greater purpose of opening up new perspectives and insights.

According to Engels-Schwarzpaul (2016), non-traditional research carries a dynamic relationship between the centripetal and centrifugal forces; between Apollonian and Dionysian traits of thought. Centripetal forces pull inward to already established research frameworks and boundaries, while centrifugal forces pull away from the stability of this established framework (Engels-Schwarzpaul, 2016; Rosenberg, 2000). In this thesis, I have not reduced this tension to a conclusive answer, rather I have wanted to let it flow and express it through multivocality and dialogical thinking. This creative tension is the fuel for generating multiple perspectives, imagination, and engagement. For its purposeful mutant nature, my research follows these characteristics of a non-traditional research. If there is a name that can reflect the spirit of this research, it would be the term “non-traditional”, a path to produce knowledge in an alternative way.

### **Blurring the Chapters**

The sequence of the chapters and their less visible demarcation might create confusion. However, the blurring of different chapters was done intentionally as a strategic politics of inviting a new perspective. For several years, I worked as a professional researcher in the positivist paradigm. I remember I often blurred my writing on theories and method, and had to rewrite them. In those years, I never felt I was telling what I meant to say and how I meant to say it. Fortunately, my Ph.D. research is a diversion from this positivist paradigm, and I can express honesty in spontaneous ways of knowledge making. Clarity is not only about following the conventional rules and regulations for demarcation of ideas, but also about the genuine human expression that reflects embodied experience. While writing the different chapters, I set out to separate their content according to conventional rules. At some point, I found that although the chapters were different based on their focus and functions, they were inseparable, and to some extent, quite blurred in terms of the borders. Although the chapter ‘The Art of Seeing’ has a focus on methodological

aspects, it also includes a large part of theoretical aspects. Further, the autobiography is more or less present in all the chapters. Their absolute separation and demarcation would do an injustice to the holistic aspects and the overall performative style of this research. As a part of the overall performative creative strategy, the chapters and sections will proceed with creative titles rather than conventional ways of sequencing and labelling the thesis. This strategy is purposefully crafted to create intimate bonding with the subject matter, in order to produce knowledge in an alternative way.

### **Thus the “Bricolage” Unfolds and the “In-between Space” Becomes More Visible**

In terms of relating life experiences to theories with an acceptance of the complexity and multiplicity of the context, a plethora of diverse methods, perspectives and paradigms needed to be woven together in this thesis (Berry, 2006, Lowan-Trudeau, 2012; Rogers, 2012; Steinberg, 2006). The project purposefully and strategically becomes a “bricolage” through weaving and merging multiple theoretical, methodological and interpretive paradigms for exploring new domains of interdisciplinarity, innovation and interrelationships which places the life journey of non-Western women in that fluid, constantly changing dynamic space (Steinberg, 2006, p.119). In this space, the conversation between Buddhism and feminism gets a fresh perspective to see and interpret the reality in a new way. In my opinion, “bricolage” gives non-traditional research a creative bargaining capability with the conventional demands of mainstream academic research. It brings equilibrium to the power plays between existing norms and regulations and the drive against fixed hegemonic conventions.

In the next chapters, this “bricolage” will unfold as a diversion away from conventional Ph.D. research. Unlike a conventional Ph.D. journey, a bricolage Ph.D. travels without accurate

prediction. As a result, in every step, there is a shock, wonder, disappointment as well as surprise with the new entry of multiple ideas. However, this diversion is not absolute and authoritarian. It does not completely replace the previous ways; rather it makes a relationship with the previous patterns in new ways.

The next two chapters outline my approach to Tibetan Buddhism in this thesis, and the relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and feminism. This view will draw attention towards the lack of a non-Western voice, representation and women's intimate religious and spiritual experiences. In chapter four, 'The Art of Seeing', I will explain the ways I have adopted to address this lack through arts-based and fictocritical approaches, dialogic and nomadic principles, fusions of eastern and western narratives, and autoethnography. This explanation will lay the groundwork for understanding the ways in which theoretical insights will be developed and expressed. In chapter five titled 'Feminism and Tibetan Buddhism in an in-between space', I will discuss the characteristics and importance of theoretical bricolage and a nomadic approach for a free flow of ideas to value the relationship between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism in real life experiences. The theoretical bricolage will explore the multivalent aspects of in-between space in terms of feminist Buddhist subjectivity, spatial imagination and cultures. This is followed by chapter six titled 'Stories within the story'. This chapter consists of two sections: the first one explains the usefulness of the mythological story and archetypes that will be used in the biographical narrative, and the second one is a biographical narrative. To conclude, I will bring the creative and critical parts together in relating theories to experience in chapter seven, 'Calligraphy in One Stroke'.

As the thesis proceeds, the in-between space assumes the nature of "always becoming", an unfolding of perspective and meanings. It celebrates "an-Other term", a third possibility that works to break down the categorically closed logic of the "either-or" in favour of a different, more

flexible and expansive logic of the “both-and-also” (Soja, 2000, p. 20). Awareness of the multivalent in-betweenness gives new meanings to the relationship between feminism and Buddhism where Buddhism and feminism go through a spontaneous organic process of losing and finding their individual exteriority through reflection on the extent of the separateness of their unique interiority. Their encounter, union, interaction and diffusions give birth to more open-ended questions, thoughts, and possibilities with multiplicity in motion.



*This page intentionally left blank*

*This page intentionally left blank*

## CHAPTER 2

### **“TIBETAN BUDDHISM”: THE NON- HEGEMONIC GAZE**

David McMahan, the author of “The Making of Buddhist Modernism” was brought up in an Evangelical family in USA (McMahan, 2015). He first came to know about Buddhism through some books and from visiting a Zen teacher. While studying Buddhism in a Western institution, he began to notice the distance between the Buddhist scholars who wrote the Buddhist texts in an ancient time and how the eastern scholars understood Buddhism. When he travelled to Asia, his oriental romanticism about Buddhism was largely shattered. Instead of one version of Buddhism, he encountered multiple versions of Buddhism based on different cultural contexts. His life experience deeply influenced his scholarly ideas in “Buddhist Modernism”, in which he elucidates the social, historical and intellectual forces that have reshaped Buddhism through a dynamic interaction with modernity in the west (McMahan, 2008). Although McMahan’s book is more about his ideas and less about his experience behind these ideas, his experience reflects the significance of reflexivity, subjectivity and individual context in understanding Buddhism through heterogeneous lenses. We cannot disregard academic scholar Charles S. Prebish’s contention that our professional and personal lives are interdependent and our personal experience with a religion is intertwined with the way we understand and articulate the religion for the academic purpose (American Academy of Religion, 2012; Prebish, 2011). To write a PhD thesis on Buddhism and feminism, I cannot escape the ways my personal history has influenced my scholarly presentation. I have interacted with Tibetan Buddhism in a time of globalization, when the paradoxical play

between postmodern individuality and particularity, and the reconceptualization of identity, culture and collective roots have blurred dichotomies between categories such as ‘privatized’ and ‘institutionalized’ religion, ‘Western’ and ‘Asian’ Buddhism, ‘secular’ and ‘traditional’ Buddhism. In this postmodern time, the questions ‘how Tibetan Buddhism is represented and how meaning is given to it ’ need better attention than the question of the rhetoric of authenticity of Buddhism.

I was introduced to Tibetan Buddhism through books and teachings designed for a western audience, mainly for converts or people interested in Buddhism. As a result, my understanding of Buddhism resembled McMahan’s ‘Modern Buddhism’ to a large extent, where meditation, liberal ideas, gender equality play a central role (Lopez, 1995; McMahan 2008, Schedneck, 2007). However, unlike the way scholars of Modern Buddhism have conceptualized “Modern Buddhism” with secular and liberal elements, my interaction with Buddhism had devotional, mystic and ritualistic elements. Unlike the dominant scholarly understanding, in my life Tibetan Buddhism is not to be found in a demarcated separated paradigm from other aspects. It is intermingled with other aspects of life in an obscured way. A categorized understanding of my journey with Tibetan Buddhism will hinder its dynamic and confirm an orientalist approach to religion that I am trying to resist in this thesis. Based on my personal experience, I attempt in what follows to describe Tibetan Buddhism in a nutshell that will be reflected in my autoethnography in the later parts of the thesis. But before understanding how I relate to Tibetan Buddhism as a religion and spiritual practice, it is necessary to undo the influence of orientalism that lurks in scholarly paradigms, and which creates a hegemonic scholarly foundation for presenting ideas. Throughout the whole thesis, I will argue for a non-hegemonic gaze that uses messy, unstructured, non-colonizing ways to resist

a Western colonizing perspective, which I argue relies on clarity, command, authority, and categorization. This chapter is part of this strategic politics.

### **What Type of Buddhism It Is?**

From McMahan's (2004) perspective, the Buddhism that I and many converted women have encountered is a reconfiguration of a form of traditional Buddhism which emphasizes selective elements that have inspiring compatibility on some secular or western liberal ideas. Lopez (1995) agrees with McMahan's observation that this "Modern Buddhism" is largely constructed by ideologies and social practices of the modern West. McMahan (2004, 2008) emphasizes the influence of scientific rationalism, Protestant Christianity, and Romanticism in packaging Buddhist ideas for Western audiences, with little attention paid to rituals, myths, superstitions and other elements perceived as 'cultural baggage'. This 'strong intertwined modernising process over the last 150 years' has created 'hybrids of Buddhism and Modern western thoughts and practice (McMahan, 2004, p.899). McMahan appears to be less orientalist by admitting that it is not only the Western scholars who have played a crucial role in constructing a particular narrative or imagination of Buddhism suited to the audience in the West. He acknowledged that Asian Buddhist institutions and teachers have also played a part in this process to expand their teachings in the West. According to Schedneck (2007, p. 59), "Modern Buddhism" has some distinctive traits: greater participation for women and emphasis on gender equality; highlighting some parts of Buddhism as Buddha's 'original' teachings; negligence towards magical and ritual elements; identifying Buddhism's compatibility with science; the laicisation of Buddhist formations; relating Buddhist concepts with social engagement; and propagating meditation as a central practice of Buddhism. 'It stresses equality over hierarchy, the universal over the local, and often exalts the

individual over the community' (Lopez, 2004; p .8). This provokes some questions. Does that mean there was a particular Buddhism from which this new modern Buddhism has evolved? Is there a 'traditional' form of Buddhism in the East or non-Western space, and another Buddhism constructed by the forces of modernity in the West? McMahan and Lopez do not talk about this issue explicitly. Their ideas are more about how the narrative and imagination of "Modern Buddhism" has been constructed over time through various social and cultural factors.

In a critical note, the scholars of Buddhist modernism have not been able to come out of Western ways of categorization and the claim of objective reality. There is a still search or contention for a 'pure Buddhism' or original Buddhism that existed in the East. Implicitly, there is a still a mild orientalist tendency which prioritizes the Western influence in developing Buddhism in accordance with science, gender equality and individualism.

It should be noted that it is not that Buddhism was a pure religion which changed due to encounters with the West. History says that there was always fluidity and hybridity in Buddhism. Buddhism has always traveled since its inception in India between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. There was always an integration and adaptation to different cultures in this journey. As a result, Buddhism in Myanmar looks different from Buddhism in the Ladakh areas of India; Buddhism in Sri Lanka looks different from Buddhism in Japan and China; Buddhism in the time of the founder Sakyamuni Buddha in the fifth century B.C. India is not the same as Buddhism in the time of 14<sup>th</sup> Century Japan or Tibet, or the Buddhism in the USA or India in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Pointing to the distinctive nature of Buddhism in general of our time, Bhikkhu Bodhi (Bhikkhu Bodhi in Cho, 2015; p. 129) – a Theravada Buddhist Western monk practising Asian tradition for 47 years said:

The concept of universal human rights of the inherent dignity of humankind, the ideals of liberty and equality, of the brotherhood of man; the demand for equal justice under the law and comprehensive

economic security; the rejection of external authorities and trust in the capacity of human reason to arrive at truth; the critical attitude towards dogmatism, the stress on direct experience – all derive from this period and all influence the way we appropriate Buddhism.

The reason I refer to this debate here is to attempt to pre-empt the question the reader may have at this point – namely, “Is this thesis referring only to Modern Buddhism?” Since this question will miss the point of the thesis which is to reveal the in-betweenness of categories and cultures in a non-Western woman’s life. To come to a conclusion in terms of yes or no will largely disregard the main argument of this thesis that is to reveal the in-betweenness of a non-Western woman’s life where categories lose their boundaries. In this context, rigid categories would negate the main feature of this knowledge. Through the autoethnography, we will see that the way I have constructed the narrative of Buddhism in my life does not fall easily into categories such as “Modern Buddhism” or “Traditional Buddhism.” Initially, there is prioritization of meditation, equanimity, interdependence, compassion and individuality in integrating Buddhist practice in life. That might give a sense of Modern Buddhist practice. However, if someone scrutinizes deeply, it will be evident that there is also place for traditional elements like the belief in rebirth, Guru devotion and surrender, with a personalized ascribed meaning. There is an ambiguous interplay among the elements of the modern and traditional part of Buddhism. The experience if placed in the context of Modern Buddhism creates more questions rather than answers. It is this open-endedness that the thesis aims to cherish.

At this point, I take the opportunity to discuss an orientalist trap in understanding religion which will facilitate the understanding of my approaches to Buddhism in later parts of the thesis (King, 1999). The orientalist approach reduces religion to a kind of cultural existence which is separate

from secular human engagement (King, 1999). This approach includes a scholarly tendency to project a fundamental dualism between the human and divine, the sacred and profane (King, 1999). Droogers (1999) agrees with King that dichotomous thinking in the academic field makes a distance between scholarly attempts to define religion and the way a religious believer understands and embraces religion. Orientalists would study Tibetan Buddhism like natural science and judge it according to Eurocentric modern notions of reason. This judgment would exclude the wisdom of Tibetan Buddhism as knowledge if it does not confirm European Enlightenment understanding of rationality and objectivity. Implicitly or explicitly, an orientalist approach disregards multiple aspects of reality, heterogeneity, complexity as well as the transpersonal aspect of religion. It refuses to value how human beings, regardless of from the East or West, can give diverse meaning to intimate religious experiences. In the field of Tibetan Buddhism, the orientalist trap may also arise in over-fantasizing Tibetan Buddhism as exotic or perfect, and “Tibet” as “Shangri-La” (Lopez, 1998; Mullen, 1998; Suh, 2015). According to Edward Said, this understanding reflects western fantasies and imagination of the exotic “other” other than the subject itself (Mullen, 1998; Said, 1979).

The reverse can also happen in understanding Tibetan Buddhism. Western views can be judged as inferior, meaningless or materialistic. This tendency can be extended to make the non-Western understanding of Tibetan Buddhism a panacea to all the problems of the world. To avoid both of these extreme perspectives, one needs to embrace and explore the paradoxes, ambiguities and complexities of sameness and difference, universality and heterogeneity. There is a tendency to understand Buddhism in dichotomous categorized ways: Western Buddhism versus Asian Buddhism; secular Buddhism or natural Buddhism versus traditional Buddhism; privatized or deeply personal forms of Buddhist practice versus institutional or traditional Buddhist practice.



Western Buddhism, which is considered to be comparatively secular Buddhism is demarcated as the Buddhist practices and teachings that are developed for Western students with strong value and respect for individualism, flexibility and Modern egalitarian principles (Halafoff et al., 2012). Western Buddhism tends to focus more on individual autonomy and agency in understanding the mind, emotions and Buddhist philosophical concepts like “emptiness” (Rasheta, 2015). On the other hand, Asian Buddhism, which is often perceived as traditional Buddhism, is considered to be based on faith, devotion and rituals with a focus on mystic and exotic elements like deities, “beings” of different realms, and reincarnation. Similar to the dichotomy of Western and Asian Buddhism, privatized Buddhism is seen to be in opposition to institutional Buddhism – individualistic without any or little allegiance to a religious institution and instruction (Greer & Roof, 1992; Gay & Lynxwiler, 2013; Tanaka, 2007). There is also strong intellectual projection to create two Buddhisms, based on ‘a gulf between Buddhist immigrants and converts’ in the West (Seager 1999, p. 233). Amidst all these classifications, there is a tendency to search for original Buddhism or pure or authentic Buddhism based on Indian origin and classical texts.

I agree that there can be possibilities of opposition between the two streams of the institutional and privatized. However, I would like to argue that the dichotomy may not work in very symmetrical, clear and linear ways in real life. In order to notice the blurred lines between these different categories, one needs to value personal experience without reducing the ambiguities and paradoxes of real life to a western or positivist mode of certainty, conclusiveness, demarcation and clarity.

Categories like Western and secular, Asian and traditional might be useful for understanding the diversity in Buddhist practice in a particular place, time and context; but the fixed way of understanding the categories can obscure the complex interrelationship among these categories. According to Baumann (2001), there is internal plurality and heterogeneity of Buddhist schools in

the West. Tibetan Buddhist practice and rituals may vary between Buddhist centers, groups and individuals depending on the particular school, lineage and teacher as well as the individual's particularity. Traditional elements like Guru devotion, emphasis on rituals, strong faith in supernatural beings and Modern elements like the value of equality, individualism and freedom of choice can be present concurrently and interact ambivalently in both individual and collective Buddhist practice (Barker & Rocha, 2011). Therefore, an open-ended approach to understanding how a seeker approaches Tibetan Buddhism and gives meaning to its practice may bring more insights into human religious life than identifying categories and classifications in a seeker's apprehension of Buddhism. This open-ended, inclusive, and messy approach can be a critical resistance against Western hegemonic knowledge and unearth non-Western perspectives.

### **Spirituality and Religion: A Personal View from the Perennial Approach**

Some common misunderstandings regarding spirituality are that it is an abstract concept, a kind of escape zone, a metaphysical adventure in separation to real life, or supernatural and superhuman capability. Sometimes, a person claiming to be spiritual is seen as a saint-like being. However, to a spiritual seeker, the meaning of spirituality can be quite different. A spiritual seeker might be very good at compassionate behaviour or having a very deep insight on impermanence, and equally poor in terms of verbal communication, assertiveness or professional or technical skills (Wilber, 2011, a, b). Spiritual transformation is a process which takes time to be grounded in one's life and personality (Wilber, 1996). This transformation takes place at a very subtle level and might not be very vivid and noticeable (Batchelor, 2012). In Tibetan Buddhism, it is believed that a seeker strives for enlightenment gradually, life after life. This belief implies the unpredictable process of transformation over time. A seeker who is still in the process of transformation might not act or behave like an enlightened being or a saint, or show signs of perfect control over negative emotions

even after several years of doing spiritual practice. To find a meaning of spirituality in a person's life, one needs to overcome the barriers of expectation, prejudice and fantasy that are prevalent in judging a spiritual seeker.

Eckersley (2007) defines spirituality as deeply intuitive and spontaneous connectedness that has the very power and full capacity to transcend people's personal circumstances, social situations and the material world, at the same time can address the questions of mortal existence at a very subtle level. To me, spirituality is a particular way of connecting to life and the cosmos on the basis of well-being, interconnection, wholeness, unconditional love and the wisdom on complexity, conditions, fluidity, multiplicity, deep nuances and mysticism of reality. It is a process of transcendent self-inquiry.

As a spiritual seeker, I found great difficulty in demarcating Tibetan Buddhism in my life from other aspects including feminist values. However, I was not outside the Western scholarly paradigm where religion has been studied and understood in terms of Protestant Christianity (King, 1999). Although I was challenging its foundation and periphery, I had to encounter the Western scholarly practice of identifying religion with an "essence" (Balagangadhara, 1994). Categories and phenomena such as reliance on divine or surrender to divine guidance, "relationship to God", dependence on "supernatural reality", and "spirit" dominate in this classification and essentialization (Alston, 1967). Herbrechtsmeier (1993) questions the reliance on God or a higher authority in defining a religion pointing out that the Theravada school of Buddhism is devoid of dependence on absolute divine authority. Keith Yandell (1999) argues for understanding a religion as a particular way of interpreting the relationship between the world and human beings in it, and how life should be lived through a set of rituals, institutions and practices. Geertz (1973) proposed a definition of religion almost akin to subculture. According to Geertz (1973), a religion is

interrelated symbols of a cultural system which has the capacity to establish a sense of experience, including moods and motivations through conceptualizations used by the believers to interpret the world and their lives. Although Geertz has defined “religion” in very Western terms, and very much in terms of Protestant Christianity, I found these approaches have more potential to capture all kinds of religious practices, including the ones which do not centre on divine authority like Western Christian religions. According to Woodhead (2011), five predominant concepts are used to define and understand religion: religion has been understood as culture, identity for community creating and organizational belonging, social relations among individuals, group and communities as well as God, ancestors and supernatural beings, practice of rituals and embodiments, and as a form of higher power that determines human being’s conditions in mysterious ways. Although all these concepts are useful, they should not be taken as exhaustive, separate from each other, demarcated and fixed. In this regard, I agree with Beckford’s (2003) proposal that religion should be understood with close ties to its contexts of use. Besides these five concepts, Rudolph Otto argued that religion is a distinct kind of experience (Otto, 1931; Woodhead, 2011). Otto (1931) terms this special experience as *numinous* which has the capacity to bring a sense of meeting something greater than the mundane world and self, tranquility, awe and grace. Ninian Smart (1969) theorised religion in terms of the following dimensions: Ritual, Mythological, Doctrinal, Ethical, Social, and Experiential (1969: 15-25). Later, Smart (1989) added a seventh dimension of religion – the Material. Smart’s dimensional model is considered to be an alternative to the categorical model. The ritual dimension rests upon the practice of a community’s beliefs, evident through the actions of Worship, Praying, Regular Gatherings, etc. The experience dimension is found in evoking feelings of security, comfort, sacredness, awe, inexplicable presence, mystery, ecstasy, etc. The mythical dimension is constituted by sacred stories of miracles, sacrifice and

glorifying the historical characters and communities and their relationship with the divine. The doctrinal dimension lies in the philosophical ideas about the nature of divinity or ultimate reality, and the relationship of humans to that ultimate, real, divinity (e.g. concept of emptiness in Buddhism). The ethical and legal dimensions are the behavioural precepts or guidelines for living life in relation to self, society and family, such as the five precepts of Buddhism, the ten commandments, etc. The social dimension is evident in a religious tradition's social organizations (e.g. *Masjid*, temple, church), wherein believers interact with the community in the public sphere. The material dimensions are the architecture, paintings, statues, books, etc. that reflect symbols, myths and traditions of the religion; such as, *Thangka* – Tibetan Buddhist painting of sacred beings and signs. In the recent religious movements, these dimensions vary, and particular dimensions are emphasized while others are muted (Smart, 1989). One can contend that the experiential and materialist dimensions are more strongly emphasized than other dimensions in Modern Buddhism. However, Smart's approach is limited due to the Western scholarly practice of understanding reality through absolute command, categorization and a projection of adequacy.

I was relieved to come across Jonathan Z. Smith's words, 'Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization' (Smith, 1982, p. xi). The construction of religion through clarity, classification, and categorization is related to western imperialism (Fitzgerald, 2000). Peter Harrison in his book, *"Religion" and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (1990) contends that Western Enlightenment thought provides a framework for classifying particular aspects of human life, including religion. According to Peter Hamilton (1992), the foundations of Enlightenment are the primacy of reason and rationality, empiricism, universalism, a progressive view of society, values such as tolerance, rhetoric of freedom, and secularism (particularly anti-

clericalism). Anthropologist Talal Asad (1993) argued that attempts to construct a universal definition of religion would not be wise since the definitions of religion are historically rooted in western modern discourse. According to Asad (1993), the model of religion developed in the western post-reformation setting was for the political purpose of secularists and religious liberals seeking to define and demarcate their territory. Joseph D. Bittis (1975, p. 170) comments that ‘the attempt to describe religion as a separate and independent sphere of human activity did not appear until the nineteenth century. ... Religion was identical with the style of life’. Brent Nongbri (2013) brings more clarity to this observation noting that although religion has become a universally definable Modern concept, ancient people did not use religious practice as separate from secular aspects of life. Religious practice and values were assimilated into everyday life and its concerns, and the boundary between the secular and religious world was fluid. Both Smith and Nongbri’s observations remind me of a distance between the personal meaning of religious practice in real life and the way Western scholarly paradigms have delineated and defined the term. Herbrechtsmeier’s (1993) contends that, rather than understanding religion in an essential way, in relation to God, spirits or other supernatural beings, it would be better to consider the ways in which religious people approach and conceive of ultimate reality. Ultimately, it was this view that resonated most with what I am doing in this thesis.

When I think of Tibetan Buddhism, I immediately think of special experience. This is akin to Willam James’ (1902) approach to understanding religion as primarily about special experience of a higher, unseen reality that cannot be understood through reason alone and can change lives in a positive way, normally referred to as “divine” (James, 2010). It is noteworthy that one of James’ conditions for identifying religious experience is its ability to bring positive changes in life. Proudfoot (1985) traced the development of the idea of viewing religious experience as a category

to Friedrich Schleiermacher, who emphasized the root of religion in the feelings of the infinite not influenced by language or abstract concepts (Schleiermacher, 1799; 1958). He acknowledged human's endeavour to relate our gross experienced consciousness of the Divine within the human social sphere. Schleiermacher (1799), James (1902), and Otto (1931) make religious experience central to the understanding of religion focusing on its non-conceptual nature. Their idea that religion is a special kind of profound human experience is close to, although not the same as, perennial philosophy and transpersonal psychology's focus on transpersonal aspects of religion. While transpersonal psychology seeks to understand human's spiritual experience through the combined approaches of Eastern spiritual explanation and western psychological schools, perennial philosophy is interested in the commonalities among different religious traditions in terms of experience. Both are compatible with each other for exploring commonalities of different religions on the basis non-conceptual spiritual experiences. However, it should be considered that transpersonal psychology and perennial philosophy propose an expanded view that the transpersonal experience can be deeply in relation to sociological aspects of culture, identity, power, practice and social relationship. This approach is quite similar to what I felt, touched and experienced in terms of Tibetan Buddhism.

My approach to spirituality and its relationship to religion reflect the approach of perennial philosophy that is interested in special experiences which are both within and beyond culture, identity, social relations, practice and power. According to perennial philosophy, all the religious practices seek a common goal – a realization of human's transcendental nature (Ferrer, 2000). By taking this approach, I do not disregard or overlook the violence, discrimination and inequality that have come about in the name of religion. Understanding of a religion should acknowledge the inherent ambivalence and paradoxes in religion due to its multifaceted use in human lives, history

and society. Religion should neither be reduced to its spiritual potential nor to its institutional and cultural embeddedness in society. It is true that religion has been used to perpetuate authority, exclusion and hierarchy; at the same time, it is also true that there are a number of people in history who have relied on religious practice (such as rituals, symbolic practices, etc.) for spiritual experiences like unconditional love, interconnection and wholeness.

Perennial philosophy emphasises the spiritual aspects of religion. To a large extent, transcendent spiritual experiences are non-conceptual and non-linguistic (Metzner, 1980). From the perspective of perennial philosophy, all religions are different interpretations of the same transcendent experiences. The diversity of religions is not due to the difference of inner spiritual experiences, but because of their origin and development in different historical, cultural, political, social and personal contexts. A personal God, an impersonal Brahman from Hinduism, “Almighty God” from Christianity, Judaism and Islam, “Enlightenment” in Buddhism – all are diverse ways of understanding the same transcendent principle or inner spiritual experience (Smart, 1965; Stace, 1960). Ken Wilber argues that there are some points common to all religious traditions in terms of spiritual aspects (Wilber 1998 a; 1998 b). Firstly, there is one spirit which can be named as Buddha, God or the divine; secondly, this divine is the great encompassing spirit as a whole and it penetrates everywhere in the universe; thirdly, it is within us and we are part of this spirit; fourthly, we feel disconnected with the Great Spirit because of our dual view based on the separation of one’s finite self from others and the universe; and fifthly, there is a path to liberation that if followed, one can reach enlightenment or unite with the Great Spirit. This transcendent way of being is both within and at the same time beyond this material and sensory world (Wilber, 2000). The Great Spirit is both separate and mingled within our present self, at the same time beyond the finitude and conditions. It has form, at the same time it is beyond form. According to Wilber (2000), the



spiritual journey initiates a self-inquiry which leads to self-realization of awareness of infinity, vastness and unconditional love. This enquiry goes deeper and deeper in a spiritual journey, and at some point it goes beyond the gross duality where concepts of separate “subject” and “object” ceases, the conventional manifestation of the whole world ceases to arise as solid or essential reality, and one feels the naked existence of God or Buddhahood or the kingdom of heaven or *Fana* – the union with Allah (Wilber, 2000). Wilber (1998 a and b) thinks that every human being has the potentiality to be united with the Great Spirit and to experience the wholeness and infinite way of being. This approach echoes the teaching of Buddhism – everyone has a hidden Buddha nature and the potential to be enlightened (Wilber, 1998 a and b). Wilber’s approach reflects the way he understands perennial philosophy in relation to religion and spiritual experience. From the dualistic and binary perspective, this approach can be considered as an invocation of universality. I will address this issue in the following discussion in relation to my personal experience and views. Although my view will reflect a non-dichotomous view on the difference of religions, I do not make it as a universal claim.

Wilber’s way of seeing spirituality makes sense in my spiritual quest, especially the way I give meaning to my path. Just like Torwesten has noticed that the centre of Vedantic wisdom lies in going beyond the words and concepts of Vedanta to realize a transcendent knowledge, I have found that all the linguistic and conceptual aspects of religious practice strive towards a transcendent spiritual sense of life and being where both unity and difference can have harmonious presence (Torwesten, 1991). Therefore, the experience can be both universal and relative.

On the basis of perennial philosophy, transpersonal psychology studies the spiritual dimension of human’s consciousness (Clark, 2016). Unlike dominant Western psychology, transpersonal psychology uses the wisdom of Asian contemplative traditions to explain and explore the spiritual

potential of human consciousness (Clark, 2016). In this thesis, I have used spirituality and transpersonal interchangeably. However, the lines of their difference and delineation are debatable. The reason for using transpersonal and spiritual interchangeably is mainly technical. While explaining spiritual experience for intellectual academic paradigms, I found the vocabulary for referring to a spiritual experience is very limited. From the spiritual seeker's perspective, spiritual experiences are beyond accurate linguistic expressions (Wilber, 1998 a, b; 2000). A large part of this experience is non-linguistic and non-conceptual. For centuries, spiritual seekers have explained spiritual experience in a very different way, mainly through creative expressions. Although I have also resorted to the same way in this thesis, unfortunately, I cannot solely rely on this medium due to the academic constraints and expectations. The words that usually express spiritual experience only give an idea, an imagination of how the experience would like to be. Even transpersonal psychology's interpretation of spiritual experience cannot claim to be the most accurate explanation. However, as a spiritual seeker, I have found that explanations of transpersonal psychology are the most reliable and the nearest analogy of spiritual experience compared to other intellectual disciplines.

Transpersonal psychology suggests that all spiritual experiences share some common features like unity awareness or oneness, freedom from emotional suffering, unconditional love for others, wholeness or infinite way of being, timelessness, luminosity, loss of the fear of death or sense of evil or separation from the cosmos, profound peace and joy with deeply relaxed openness, and absence of narcissism or sense of superiority (Bucke, 1960; Conway, 1988; Goleman, 1985; Huxley, 1944; Wade, 1996). The question whether this view propagates an essential view is subject to debate within perennial philosophy and outside (Ferrer, 2000). I am aware that the way proponents of perennial philosophy relate spiritual experience in different religions to the same the

source is reminiscent of McCutcheon's 'abstract sameness', which runs the risk of 'effectively overlook[ing] the differences that most often define actual lived experience' (McCutcheon, 1997, p. 23).

However, we need to take into consideration that epistemic dualism is still dominant in Western ways of understanding, and an obstacle to understanding the spiritual dimension of human life (Ferrer, 2000, 2002; Tarnas, 1991). The bipolar and hierarchical way of understanding objective versus subjective, universal versus relative, same versus difference can overshadow the potential of the non-dichotomous, non-hierarchical and non-oppositional way of valuing the relationship among these categories in the spiritual quest. In spiritual experiences, there can be universal aspects like oneness, wholeness, peace, bliss, at the same time there can be difference and individuality when one interprets these experiences by using particular symbols and contexts. However, both of the aspects of universality and differences are of equal importance. For example, a Muslim Sufi mystic might access the experience of the oneness of all creation and inner peace through a whirling dance, and a Buddhist monk might find this experience through sitting in meditation. They have their individual ways to access the spiritual experiences. Can a Muslim Sufi be forced to have the experience of peace and love through seated meditation, or should a Buddhist monk be persuaded to have the experience of peace and love through a Sufi dance?

The spiritual experiences of mystics from different traditions convey the message of copresence of commonalities and difference in the transcendent experiences (Huxley, 1944; Ullman & Reichenberg-Ullman, 2001; Underhill, 1955). Their individual journeys are unique, reflecting the individual particularity and diverse conditions of life, yet their inner spiritual realizations are common (Ullman & Reichenberg-Ullman, 2001). A sole reliance on postmodern perspectives would ignore the universal aspect of this experience, at the same time the Modern or essential view

would undermine the diversity and heterogeneity. That is why, a perennial philosophical approach refuses to fall either in the Modern, essential, universal approach or in a postmodern way. It should be noted that although perennial philosophy sees ‘a unity that is beyond the veil of multiplicity and origin of all sacred forms’, it does not ignore the value of difference among religious practices (Conway, 1988; Nasr, 1996; p. 18). I find that the difference and sameness can be explored in a non-dichotomous and non-hierarchical way. In the long run, this non-dichotomous approach can promote the harmonious existence of multi-faiths in the community, family and individual life.

My personal experience complies with the approach of perennial philosophy in terms of a multi-faith based spiritual journey. I was born and brought up by Muslim parents in Bangladesh. Since childhood, I learned how to read the *AlQuran* and pray five times a day. However, I was always interested in more than one religion. All the religions appeared to me to be different manifestations of one divine. I was particularly drawn to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition for a number of reasons: It has non-dogmatic and inclusive views. Theoretically, Tibetan Buddhism does not hold missionary goals of converting the whole world to their view. Tibetan Buddhism has a strong emphasis on compassion and understanding the mind which appeared to be very deep and worthy of knowing. Tibetan Buddhism has a concept of the femininity through which I found a respect and dignity for woman’s embodiment. The monastic leaders of Tibetan Buddhism, particularly His Holiness the Dalai Lama's vision and mission for world peace appealed to me to a great extent for creating a harmonious society based on equality and diversity. There is also another very personal reason for my deep interest in Tibetan Buddhism which I would like to share to express human being’s intimate religious experience. This reason may sound ridiculous, but this is the reason that is stated by many people in the Tibetan Buddhist community. Many people whom I have met and I myself, have felt a spontaneous connection with Tibetan Buddhist practices, rituals,

and language which does not have a “Modern” reasonable explanation. This inexplicable connection is often interpreted as a previous life connection by many Buddhist seekers. In Tibetan Buddhist communities, this interpretation is equally reasonable as the justification for choosing Buddhism due to its comparatively less non-authoritarian ways.

I also had immense interest in Hinduism since childhood. Initially, I was not drawn to it like Tibetan Buddhism. One of the reasons was the way I encountered its authoritative institutional character in my culture and community. Later in life, meditation and other Tibetan Buddhist practices made me more interested in the spiritual dimension of human being’s consciousness. This interest eventually guided me to explore Hinduism based on its spiritual aspect. In Australia, I met some Gurus and teachers from different schools of Hinduism. Their teachings were non-sectarian with an emphasis on the spiritual aspect of the religion. Gradually I found, Hindu mantras and meditation were also helping my mind to be focused, compassionate, and tranquil. This practice complemented my Buddhist practices. The same things happened in terms of other religious and spiritual traditions including “the new age spiritual practice”. It is true that theoretically Hindu views clash with the Buddhist view in terms of the interpretation of transcendent nature. Hinduism emphasises God or the true self, while Buddhism is focused on “no-self”. These two traditions should not be seen as the same. I did not find the exploration of more than one spiritual and religious practice to be confusing. This is due to my emphasis on the non-conceptual and non-linguistic aspect of the spiritual experience. The interpretations of the Buddhist teachings, or Hindu explanations, or teachings from new age healers appear to me to be “beauty in diversity” without apparent contradictions. All these different traditions enriched my spiritual quest.

Perennial approaches have influenced the way I interpret the organic relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and feminism in this thesis. If the readers are aware of my perennial understanding of religion and spiritual experiences, they will not be confused about my spiritual goal which I present in this thesis through the use of different metaphors and interpretations. For example, I have seen the transcendent through intimate relationship and desire symbolizing a natural and spontaneous drive towards the infinite or “Nirvana” or Buddhahood or enlightenment (Barton, 1990). This way of personifying transcendent aspects is unusual in Tibetan Buddhist although it is quite common in many mystic traditions including Sufism and devotional schools of Hinduism.

Although I have mentioned the concepts of culture, identity, practice, power, relation and special experiences to understand religion, I do not want to define religion as a single concept; since this definition would simply confine the unfolding of meaning that originates from life events. To me, the meaning of religion comes from contemplation rather than striving for a clear definition. Its meaning is not prescriptive, rather it represents multiple possibilities and pondering. It is neither distinctive nor identical with other aspects of life. Its identification and disidentification are matters of degrees without essence. It is neither abstract nor reducible to the cultural, social or neurological category. It is in psyche, culture, society, politics and all other aspects of life as symbols, rituals, and gestures and profound inner experience that have multiple readings in relation to infinite, sublime, mysticism and something beyond logic and reasons. When we approach religion going beyond attempts to categorize, command and control, we can break the pattern of Western hegemonic knowledge and interpret some dimensions of human life in a new way.

## **The Features of Tibetan Buddhism**

Though the origin of Tibetan Buddhism can be traced to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE in Tibet, it had roots in the Vajrayana vehicle of Buddhism in India before that time (BBC world, 2004; Smith, 2001). Besides Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism is followed in Bhutan, Mongolia and some parts of India and Nepal. However, Tibetan Buddhism is becoming increasingly popular worldwide with followers from different countries and cultures.

Tibetan Buddhism has four major schools: Nyingma, Kagyu, Gelug, and Sakya. The different schools have been developed due to the reform process of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet (Dreyfus, 2003; Powers, 2007). However the difference in Tibetan Buddhist practice can arise even within the same Tibetan Buddhist school for a geographical and personal reason. The commonalities of different schools are profound in inheriting the great scholastic institutions of northern India during the period of the dissemination of Vajrayana Buddhism to Tibet through the combined efforts between the Tibetan king and Indian masters (Powers, 2007).

I was mainly attracted to Tibetan Buddhism due to its emphasis on meditation and compassion. According to Wallace and Hodel (2008, p.x), in Tibetan Buddhism, ‘the experiential study of mind and consciousness have always been of the central importance’. Buddhism does not reduce mind to body. The mind continues to be active even after physical death. Geshe Tashi Tsering (2006), one of the learned teachers of Tibetan Buddhism, has seen the mind as a continuity of constructed events that are transient and contain elements of experience including emotions, thoughts and so on. Buddhism acknowledges that there are different levels of this mind. Mind has a conscious level on which our awareness of gross mental events takes place, an unconscious level which is below the conscious level, influences our lives and we are not aware of its presence and activity, and the

deeper or the most subtle level where lies the experience of our whole existence, and which goes from one life to another life after death.

Tibetan Buddhism teaches that the intrinsic nature of mind is pure, luminous and full of unconditional love which is innate in all sentient beings (The Dalailama, 1998; Surya Das, 1998). This state remains concealed by delusions and other destructive emotions. Buddhist teaching is focused on removing these delusions and destructive emotions so that one can discover the pure nature of mind. Allan Wallace (1999, p.175-176) explains the importance of the mind in Tibetan Buddhism in the following ways :

In stark contrast to this objective orientation of Western science, Buddhism begins with the premise that the mind is the primary source of all joy and misery and is central to understanding the natural world as a whole. In a well known discourse attributed to the Buddha declares, “all phenomena are preceded by the mind. When the mind is comprehended, all phenomena are comprehended”...moreover, just as unaided human vision was found to be an inadequate instrument for examining the moon, planets, and stars, Buddhists regard the undisciplined mind as an unreliable instrument for examining mental objects, processes, and the nature of consciousness. Over the next 2,500 years, Buddhist contemplatives have further developed and made use of those methods for training the mind, which they regard as the one instrument by which mental phenomena can be directly observed.

It does not mean that Buddhism entirely negates the role of external factors. However, the mind has the prime importance in relation to how one perceives the outer reality and reacts to the external phenomena (Tsering, 2006). Body and mind are intertwined, complex and to some extent blurred in Buddhism (Tsering, 2006; Rinpoche, 1986). The high importance of meditation should not be interpreted in the context of the demarcation between meditation, compassion, rituals, faith, and study. In my experience, I found their difference is diffused to a certain extent. For example, rituals can invoke meditative experiences of oneness and bliss; studying Buddhist philosophical doctrines



can facilitate meditative experience, or rituals can be performed with an experience of unconditional love and profound serenity. Sharf (1993, 1995, 1998) has seen the centrality of meditative experience in Buddhism as a Western intervention which less emphasized the elements of rituals, study of doctrines, and faiths and constructed the image of Buddhism as anti-ritual, anti-institutionalism, and anti-clerical to please occidental fascination with romantic orientalism. Janet Gyatso (1999) argues that Sharf has narrowly constructed the meditative experience in Buddhism, missed the heterogeneity, depth and dynamic aspect of meditative experience in Buddhist practice and texts and failed to value classic Buddhist texts and ancient Indian and Tibetan scholarly contribution to making meditation famous. Gyatso's observation that the significance of meditative experience in Buddhism was there prior to the influence of western scholarship makes us think about another face of orientalism lurking in the articulation of the ideas in Buddhist modernism. As a practitioner, I have felt an alienation in the way Sharf has understood meditative experience as demarcated from rituals and study of doctrines. In practice, this type of demarcation may not exist (Shulman, 2014). Sharf has been too Western in identifying meditative experience on the basis of sitting postures with the intention to meditate for certain hours. He did not consider that a ritual or study can turn into meditative experience. The boundary between ritual and meditation can be very fluid in terms of a practitioner's experience. This fluid boundary challenges the whole concept of an essential hierarchy of meditation compared to other practices.

In the process of transforming the mind towards enlightenment, Tibetan Buddhist practice considers renunciation, bodhicitta (very high altruistic intention to relieve all sentient from the suffering of cyclic existence) and wisdom of emptiness to be the three principal aspect of the path. According to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, these three aspects are the foundation of all practice starting from meditation to performing rituals (The Dalai Lama, 1998).

The concept of compassion in Tibetan Buddhism is associated with the term *Bodhicitta* – the great compassion to free all sentient beings from the suffering realms of *Samsara* (Yeshe, 1981). Tibetan Buddhist practice emphasises the importance of compassion behind all actions and thoughts.

Renunciation, another important facet of Tibetan Buddhist practice, is not only confined to ascetic practice and monasticism. It is understood in a broad way – as a very subtle level of awareness of our suffering due to the conditions of life, death, and rebirth (Gyalsten, 2002). Renunciation is developed not as indifference to world and reality, but as an antidote to our excessive attachment, craving, and grasping for static self and materialistic pleasure.

The concept of “emptiness” in Tibetan Buddhism varies from other schools of Buddhism. In this thesis, my approach to the concept of “emptiness” is mainly based on the perspective of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism with which I am most familiar. Often, emptiness is equated with nothingness in the sense of nihilism. However, the Buddhist view on emptiness does not refer to a nihilistic worldview. The emptiness of non-inherent existence manifests through interdependent, conditioned and impermanent nature of self and phenomena (Wilber, 2006). The wisdom of emptiness is associated with a blissful void. In this radiant play of form and formless reality, subject and object are conditioned in flux, and interconnected which ultimately dissolves into blissful nothingness. Nancy McCagney has interpreted emptiness as boundless openness in reality and self (McCagney, 1997). This quality in reality and self makes change and impermanence possible. The classic Buddhist views such “*Mulamadhyamakariaks*” by Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti praise the cultivation of wisdom of emptiness within oneself as medicine for freeing one’s mind from fixed and reductive views towards reality (Ferrer, 2002; Kalupahana, 1986). An insight into emptiness has a transformative power which is cultivated in an individual’s mind after a long practice of meditation, study, and analysis of Buddhist texts.

It should be noted that this wisdom of “void” or “emptiness” as a transcendent principle is an inexpressible spiritual dimension beyond any language. A proper understanding of emptiness is experiential. That is why the famous ancient Buddhist saint Milarepa said, ‘long accustomed to meditating on the widespread chosen truth, I have forgotten the way to trace the roots of verbs, and the source of words and phrases’ (Mackenzie, 1998; p.170). This personal realization reminds us of the nature of spiritual wisdom which is beyond linguistic and conceptual boundaries.

Insight into emptiness is cultivated in a way so that it can complement *bodhicitta* or great compassion as a praxis of using intelligence to make the compassionate action effective in the most beneficial way (Schroeder, 2004). A practitioner of the Tibetan Buddhist path gradually learns to embrace the path of a *Bodhisattva* – the great compassionate being whose motivations, actions, thoughts, speech and spiritual practice are focused on benefiting others. On this path, six perfections are practiced. These six perfections are generosity, patience, morality, joyous perseverance, meditative stabilizations and wisdom on emptiness (Schinske, 2015). In one of the Mahayana Buddhist schools, the path to seek spiritual liberation in Tibetan Buddhism follows “four noble truths” – the basic Buddhist principles common to all Buddhist schools in general. The four noble truths are: suffering is the essence of life, the reason for suffering is desire, the cessation of desire is possible, and there is a path for a cessation of desire which leads to enlightenment (The Dalai Lama, 1998; Surya Das, 1998). The path to spiritual freedom from the cyclic existence of *Samsara* – the illusory and imperfect world begins with an awareness of three types of suffering: 1) suffering of the suffering (death, illness); 2) the suffering of change and 3) suffering of our conditional unenlightened existence itself (The Dalai Lama, 1998). The perfect freedom from these suffering states lies in awakening our enlightened Buddha nature – through the cessation of our delusions, ignorance and afflictive emotions (The Dalai Lama, 1998; Surya Das, 1998). This basic

teaching on suffering can be viewed in different ways. According to Surya Das (1998), this particular teaching does not mean to see everything as suffering. This view is more about becoming aware of the inevitability of suffering in our lives (Surya Das, 1998). Gross (1993 a) argues that this view, although important in gaining an insight into the reality, should not be enforced as denying the world and engagement with life and the present moment.

Based on the concept of suffering, the concept of *Samsara* or the illusory world of our conditioned existence is understood as the cycle of lives where all sentient beings are evolving around birth, life, death and rebirth, and experiencing suffering in different forms (Kimberly, 2013). Samsara consists of six realms of existence including hell realms (extreme suffering e.g. extreme heat or cold), ghost realms, animal realms, human realms and realms of demigods and gods (*devas*) (Mahathera, 2001; BBC, 2009). Human birth is considered to be the most precious and perfect vehicle to attain Buddhahood, since it gives a deep understanding of suffering as well as ample freedom, determination and choice for moulding life towards attaining Buddhahood (Wallace, 2001 a).

Tibetan Buddhism's emphasis on *Bodhichitta* or great compassion, a practice of moral values and value of human life for a higher purpose clarifies that although Buddhism talks about detachment, emptiness, suffering and the illusory nature of this world, but this should be not be reduced to indifference towards life. Rather all these aspects complement each other in creating possibilities for a vibrant life that is beneficial to all.

Mind in relation to *Karma* plays the most important role in determining the life experiences of sentient beings starting from the type of body one has to what type of environment one is in (Wallace, 2001 a). If the mind is prone to negative actions like anger, jealousy, hatred, guilt, shame

and pride, it is ripening the seeds of negative results for the future. If it is habituated to think and act on the basis of positive emotions like non-attachment (in a positive sense) and loving-kindness, positive results follow (The Dalai Lama, 2010). This infers that if someone is having an unpleasant experience, the person has sown the seed for it at some point of life. Does that mean a person's suffering should be accepted as self-blame? Does the concept of *Karma* invite some predetermined existence of cause and conditions where a subject is left with no choice and agency?

My response to these questions is both critical and creative. *Karma* in Buddhism is not considered as sin, punishment or reward, good or bad. Its main task is to make someone mindful of one's actions, speech and thoughts and its consequences, moment by moment (King, 2009). Buddhist approaches to *Karma* should be understood with a consideration of Buddhism's emphasis on high altruistic compassion and wisdom on the subtle and gross level of the transience of all phenomena and life. The Buddhist practice of compassion is focused on helping others, which requires that one not be indifferent to another's suffering, or justify it in terms of his/her past karma (Wallace, 2001 a). *Karma* is not a destiny and it can be changed (The Dalai Lama, 2010). The practice of changing negative *Karma* lies in transforming the mind towards more positive ways of thinking and behaving through meditation and other practice (Wallace, 2001 a). From Buddha's life to contemporary Buddhist teachers like H.H the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, there is a continuity of wise guidance for world peace and harmony in society. Their active interventions in society imply that *Karma* should not be reduced to indifference to inner and outer suffering. There are many stories in Tibetan Buddhism of even the most heinous criminals changing their life pathways through practising dharma. These stories imply a kind of agency to change our past habitual patterns or *Karma* and rewrite the future. Instead of binding a person with the excuse of destiny, the concept of *Karma* can be instrumental in bringing positive motives to action,

intervention and response. We should also take into consideration that a high level of spiritual wisdom is required to understand the way multiple causes work to bring forth a specific experience (Finnigan, 2013). It is considered that only Buddha or an enlightened being can understand the subtle intricacies of causes that give birth to particular *Karma* (Chimey, 2009; Finnigan, 2013). Unfortunately, the concept is used in reductive ways in Buddhist monastic institutions and many cultures, particularly in marginalizing women with the excuse of bad *Karma* in their past life. This shows the ambivalence and elasticity of interpretation of religious texts even in a religion like Buddhism which has its main focus on training the mind with loving-kindness.

Tibetan Buddhist practice consists of both *Sutras* – the philosophical teaching of Lord Buddha - as well as *Tantra*, the practice for a quick transformation of mind towards its pure nature through esoteric, devotional and mysterious symbols. These practices include different rituals (like performing “puja” or worship), visualizations of Buddha, chant of mantra and practices like prostrations. *Tantra* occupies a crucial part of Tibetan Buddhism. Perhaps that is why Tibetan Buddhism is often understood as Tantric Buddhism or esoteric practice. The meaning of *Tantric* Buddhism can be highly reductive if it only focuses on the esoteric part and ignores the vast teaching on compassion and emptiness. The *Tantric* practice of Buddhism is designed to bring all types of emotions, desires, experiences as well as the body and mind into the path of transformation. The *Tantric* part is taught on the strong foundation of Buddhist teaching on renunciation, emptiness, and *Bodhicitta* (Yeshe, 2014). The practice of rituals is performed with contemplation on the deep spiritual meaning behind the symbolism of ritual objects and styles. Here contemplative practice is used to bring substantial change in consciousness and a new way of perceiving reality (Caddock, 1997). These contemplative practices are more than intellectual

understanding and similar to the engagement with art using receptivity and openness (Wilber, 1998 a and b).

A large part of *Tantric* practices was developed as oral transmission, from Guru to disciple. The complexity of *Tantric* practices requires the supervision of a qualified teacher. As a result, compared to other forms of Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism prioritizes Guru devotion for a gradual transformation of the mind (Chuang, 2006; Dreyfus, 2003). However, a Guru needs to have certain qualifications to deserve devotion from the students. These requirements include control over mind's destructive emotions, being skilled and learned in Buddhist philosophy and practice, having love and compassion, no reluctance to teach and so on (The Dalai Lama, 2008; Rinpoche, 2005). A student is encouraged to observe a teacher for a long time before trusting him/her as a Guru. However, real life experiences of highly realized spiritual practitioners show that they did not need a long time to accept or recognize someone as Guru (Mackenzie, 1998). Their reliance was based on intuitive faculty and worked worthwhile in the spiritual journey. According to various life stories, how a spiritual practitioner relates to a Guru is unique (Mackenzie, 1998; Hass, 2013). There is no universal rule in this relationship except having deep love and respect for the Guru for the teaching that h/she bestows. Modern Buddhism has spent less time in understanding this element. It would be worth exploring how this relationship sustains in the modern world, and what types of feature this relationship assumes in our context. In my autoethnography, I have tried to unpack this relationship as a part of my journey and invoked a new meaning to this relationship.

Like many other religions, Tibetan Buddhism has ethics which a follower strives to integrate into his/her daily life. The main objective behind these ethics is not only about refraining from creating negative *Karma* for the future, but also creating empathy for fellow beings. One of the examples of these ethics is abstention from ten non-virtuous actions of body, mind and speech including: no

killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, harsh speech, slander, idle chatter, covetousness, malice and holding a “wrong view” (Wallace & Hodel, 2008, p. 223). Wrong views include a reckless thought and approach; for example, thinking that actions do not have any consequences in the future. However, these meanings are general and its interpretation is highly contextual.

Tibetan Buddhism is distinctive from other Buddhist schools in many ways. Some of the distinctive characteristics are the feminine principle and the “reincarnation” of a high spiritual practitioner or teacher. The feminine principle including *Dakini* values women’s embodiment in a sacred way. The details of this concept will be explained in subsequent chapters. For now, I will shed a brief insight on the concept of reincarnation which is a part of the belief system of this tradition. Tibetan Buddhism believes that spiritually realized masters come back into the next life to continue their path of helping other sentient beings. These highly elevated spiritual masters or practitioners are recognized through particular practices and processes by their disciples from a previous life (Mackenzie, 1996). However, this belief is not mandatory for spiritual practice. It should be also noted that in recent years, there is scientific interest in the topic of reincarnation. Some scientists are not in favour of completely rejecting this idea without further investigation (Pasricha, 2008; Stevenson, 1977; Stevenson & Haraldsson, 2003). As I mentioned earlier, this element is considered to be traditional and cultural in the paradigm of modern Buddhism. However, again my life story will reveal how faith in mysterious elements like rebirth can co-exist with liberal values and give a perspective in understanding Buddhist practice through bricolaged lenses.



Proudfoot said that ‘religious experience must be characterized from the perspective of the one who has that experience’ (Proudfoot, 1985; p. 181). Prebish’s memoir is one example of the ways in which personal interests, relationships, timing and luck, have had significant impact in developing the nuances of pedagogy and dialogue in the academic study of Buddhism (Fisher, 2013; Prebish, 2011). To conclude this chapter, I come back to the value of situated knowledge with an appreciation of ambivalence and paradoxes in understanding a woman’s religious and spiritual experiences. Tibetan Buddhist concepts, values, practices and ethics are not static and fixed in time, culture and context. Gayley (2008, 2011, 2013 and 2016a) has found that even in Modern Tibet, Buddhist concepts, values and ethics have been modified and reimagined with the context of time, politics and community. In a book, “*Dharma, Color, and Culture: New Voices in Western Buddhism*” Western Buddhist practitioners of various ethnicities (Alice Walker, Maxine Hong Kingston, Charles Johnson, Thich Nhat Hanh, and twenty-five other contributors) contributed personalized, socially-contextual perspectives on the fundamental Buddhist concepts of suffering and the path to the cessation of suffering, grounded in long experience of working at the junction of Buddhist practices and activism (Baldoquín, 2004). I have found that when an individual seeker strives to integrate Tibetan Buddhist teachings into their personal life, the concepts lose fixed and essential meaning. There is no generalized and clear recipe for how Buddhist teachings will be implemented in real experience. It largely depends on a person’s context. When I link Buddhist concepts of books and oral teachings to my life experiences and other women seeker’s biographies, I see an uncertain and ambivalent play between universal and relative meaning of Buddhist concepts and practices. Droogers (1999) has seen this ambivalence with a playful approach. This approach activates the capacity to deal with multiple ways of clarifying reality and connect dissimilar elements (Droogers, 1999). From this fluid approach, our

understanding of religion revisits the dichotomous either/or relation to contrasting categories and embraces inclusive and/or relationships between oppositional thinking. This fluidity blurs the borders between East and West, commonality and uniqueness, privatized and intuitional parts of religion. Any dualistic gaze, including a binary postmodern one, would miss the ambivalence of real experiences in relation to Tibetan Buddhist practice. I would encourage the readers to engage with the ideas going beyond a conclusive judgment on whether my Buddhist practices and ideas are postmodern or not. However, in the course of this thesis writing, I have addressed this issue in a number of chapters. These explanations are never meant to be conclusive, but point to further contemplation for broadening understanding and engagement with the topic. As I have said before the purpose of this thesis does not lie in reducing the ambiguities, paradoxes and ambivalence of real life to the Western mode of conclusiveness, clarity, and certainty. Taking unconventional, experimental and alternative paths, the thesis aims to disrupt the disciplinary gaze in making the readers engage with my story with open-ended thoughts and nuanced understanding. In the next chapter, I will move to the areas of feminist insight on Tibetan Buddhism and explore how feminist approaches have offered new dimensions to Tibetan Buddhist teachings and institutions, and why the relationship between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism needs to be investigated in a different way in the context of a non-Western woman's life.



*This page intentionally left blank*

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **IN SEARCH OF DEEPER CONVERSATION BETWEEN**

#### **TIBETAN BUDDHISM AND FEMINISM**

In this chapter, I would like to give a glance at the general features of the scholarly conversation between Tibetan Buddhism and feminism. Although the main focus of this thesis is to develop a bricolaged methodology to capture the intricacies of a non-Western woman's life and her voice in the context of the interaction between Tibetan Buddhism and feminism, the areas related to Tibetan Buddhism which have been subject to the feminist interest have indirect or direct links to my life journey. The main theme of this chapter is to bear witness to the richness of feminist works on Tibetan Buddhism. This is tempered by critical insight on the lack of non-Western women's voices and narratives that are outside the Himalayan regions where culturally and traditionally Tibetan Buddhism is not usually practiced. I have noticed that the major feminist concerns in relation to Tibetan Buddhism include: androcentric aspects of Buddhist teaching, gender inequality in the monastic institutions, the concept of "feminine" and possibilities for a new feminist subjectivity through Tibetan Buddhist concepts such as "emptiness", "suffering" and "freedom", and historical Tibetan women's lives. In this chapter, I dwell primarily on these areas and invoke the importance of women's real life stories, particularly non-Western women's voices and narratives.

## **Women's Equal Potential for Enlightenment – Feminist Challenge to Andocentric Aspects of Buddhism**

In terms of potentiality for enlightenment, Tibetan Buddhism has no issues regarding inequality. Tibetan Buddhism promotes women's equal potentiality for enlightenment from pre-modern times to today. Feminist works consider this potential as a facilitator of women's subjectivity and freedom in the spiritual path (Allione, 1984; Gross, 1993 a; Hass, 2013). The *Tantric* part of Tibetan Buddhism is a bit ahead in this aspect. According to the perspective of Tantric aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, if women can generate a strong wish for enlightenment and strive for it, they may even progress more swiftly on the path compared to men (Changchub & Nyingpo, 2000; Shaw, 1994). Conversely, some Buddhist prayers indicate that being born as male leads to a smoother spiritual path for enlightenment (Gross, 1993 a; Gutschow, 2004; Klein, 2005; Tsomo, 2004). Androcentric approaches to Buddhism uphold women's inferior status in terms of women's *Karma* and suffering.

According to this view, *Karma* based on loving kindness, generosity, and morality can bring positive consequences in life after life; similarly, *Karma* based on hatred, anger and jealousy can bring negative consequences in present and future lives (Novick, 1999; Sestito, 2009). In comparison to men, women, in general, face more suffering in the form of rape, violence and discrimination. The patriarchal view of *Karma* considers that women have ripened the seeds of these atrocities in their previous lifetimes (Gross, 1993 a; 1998; Gyatso & Havnivick, 2005). Feminists question this explanation pointing out that since Buddhist teaching is ingrained in developing compassion and equanimity towards all, someone's past actions should not be the basis

for accepting inhuman, violent and discriminatory treatment without seeking justice (Gross, 1993 a; Khuankaew, 2008).

The issue of women's inferior status is reflected in some ancient Buddhist tales where female spiritual seekers miraculously had "a sex change" to become male for furthering spiritual practice without obstacles, or where monks were advised to avoid women's company in order to achieve spiritual realization (Gross, 1993 a). These same stories convey a different message when they are subject to a feminist interpretation (Gross, 1993 a). According to Gross (1993 a), these tales of sex-change could be viewed as non-attachment to any categorized identity for the sake of spiritual aspiration, rather than championing male dominance (Gross, 1993 a). In the same way, advice to monks about avoiding women's company could be viewed as a protection of celibacy which would be the same if the advice were imparted to nuns (Gross, 1993 a). For a woman seeker with feminist values, feminist interpretations are therapeutic. I read a tale in Gross's groundbreaking book '*Buddhism After Patriarchy*' on how a Goddess taught Buddha's chief disciple Sariputra not to stick to a fixed gendered identity (Gross, 1993 a). As a woman seeker, I found this story to be empowering amidst androcentric Buddhist tales. I wondered why I had never heard this beautiful story in any of the Buddhist teachings in which I participated. I agree with the message of this story that 'just as the stillness of space is beyond male or female one who perceives through enlightenment has the dharma which is neither male nor female' (Gross, 1993 a, p.73; Paul, 1985, p.236).

Further, I understood that the Buddhist prayers to avoid birth as a woman in future lives were given in the context of a time and culture when most women had no option but to lead a life entrapped in serving a family. Considering that context, these religious texts can be understood as indications for avoiding situations which would not be favourable for extensive spiritual practice (Gross, 1993

a). On that note, Tibetan woman teacher Jetsun Kushala's comment to feminist scholar Rita Gross is to be noted: 'one need not say the prayer to be born as a man as superior birth, if you are in America!' (Gross, 1993 a, p. 82). However, like many feminists, I understand that these prayers could be used for patriarchal purposes and portray women as inferior even in relatively egalitarian contexts.

In the biographies of historical Tibetan Buddhism female saints like Yeshe Tsogyal (757–817CE) and Sera Khandro(1892-1940), there are lamentations and grievances for being born as a woman and the inability to practice and benefit others due to this status (Changchub & Nyingpo, 2000; Jacoby, 2014). However, both of these women teachers were involved in Tantric practices, where their womanhood was appreciated as virtue, strength, and support to male counterparts. Unfortunately, when it came to the question of the community's response, such applause for womanhood resulted in little egalitarian response. Their biographies revealed their invincible spirit in overcoming all the gender related obstacles on the way to devoting themselves fully to spiritual practices. The community's perception and unequal treatment did not become an obstacle to their progress and spiritual success in their journey. Women's narratives indicate that this type of situation still persists even in contemporary times, although the extent of misogyny has lessened. The biography of Jetsunma Tenzing Palmo (1943–present), one of the first Western nuns of Tibetan Buddhist lineage, and Khandro Rinpoche (1967–present), one of the few female lineage holders in Tibetan Buddhism in our time, demonstrate the discrimination they faced in the monastic institutions of India. This discrimination is due to the perception of woman's inferior status, rooted in the androcentric interpretation of some Buddhist teachings (Hass, 2013). They successfully overcame these obstacles through persistence, patience and support from male teachers.



Feminist scholar Rita Gross, in an autobiographical note, shared how she had seen women's inferior status in Buddhism as a patriarchal dogma (Gross, 2014). According to Gross, being born as a woman would be a blessing if the particularity of the gender could be used for a higher purpose. For example, Gross's scholarly contribution on the relationship between religious studies and women's issues originated from her being a woman and experiences of patriarchal discrimination (Gross, 2014). It needs to be considered that as a North American white woman, Gross had some privileges which many women do not have. The life of Khandro Rinpoche<sup>7</sup> (before 1954), a contemporary Tibetan woman Guru and *Dakini* shows how she had to spend most of her early years in serving a large family, feeding, milking and taking care of all the cattle, and managing extremely demanding household duties (Jacoby, 2015). Despite her ardent wish to devote more time to religious practice, she was busy with work which she did not want to do. Although she succeeded in devoting herself completely to religious practice after many years of a householder's life, her opinion supports the view that being a male and monk has special privileges for devoting oneself completely to Buddhist practice (Jacoby, 2015, p. 87-88). By reading the biographical elements of renowned women practitioners and reflecting on my own experience, I understood that there is heterogeneity in the way women relate to this issue depending on their particular situatedness and experience. These stories show the fragility of the concept of women's inferior status and champion women's equal potential for enlightenment. However, the issue of women's inferior status should not be discarded in a less egalitarian context; neither should it be valorized for an excuse for a comfortable spiritual journey in this mundane world.

### **Nuns' Inequality in the Monastic Institutions**

---

<sup>7</sup> This Khandro Rinpoche should not be confused with another Khandro Rinpoche (nun and a lineage holder) whose life was mentioned with Tenzing Palmo in the same paragraph.

It is interesting to note that although Tibetan Buddhism has confirmed women's equal potential for enlightenment, Tibetan Buddhism is one of the Buddhist schools which does not give full ordination to nuns as it is available to monks<sup>8</sup>. During the time of teaching, the most senior nun is supposed to sit behind the novice monk (Allione, 2016). Although the issues embedded within the order of nuns may sound irrelevant to a laywoman like me, it relates to women's image and their position in Buddhist institutions. Bouchar's words are worth mentioning in this regard, 'if a fully committed female religious renunciant is neither supported nor honoured nor respected, is it a surprise that in the society at large women are seen as lesser beings to be exploited?' (Boucher, 2007, p. 2).

Feminist scholars have taken a critical outlook towards gender inequality in the monastic institution. The book "*Dignity & Discipline: Reviving Full Ordination for Buddhist Nuns*" for Buddhist Nuns address the problem of female ordination in Tibetan Buddhist tradition in detail (Mohr & Jampa, 2010). The book has proposed options to accomplish the goal of gender equality in the monastic institution through monastic reform and applying Buddhist teaching related to the ordination. Karma Lekshe Tsomo and Nancy Falk apprehended that doctrinal and monastic reluctance towards female ordination might be related to a deeply rooted patriarchal ideology, resulting in limiting the number of women joining the *Sangha* through demotivating woman in the pursuit of an alternate, renounced life (Falk, 1989; Tsomo, 2014). Feminist scholars have used empirical and ethnographic evidence to understand nuns'

---

<sup>8</sup> There are three levels of ordination for nuns: sramanerika (novice), siksamana (probationary), and bhikshuni (full). Through Bhikshuni ordination, a nun's status can be equal with the fully ordained monks in the monastic institution. Though there was a practice to give full Bhikshuni ordination to nuns in Tibet (known as Gelongma), it is now no longer given by Tibetan Buddhist institution. Some other Mahayana Buddhist monastic institutions offer full ordination to nuns. Since the early 1980s, over fifty Western women and a handful of Himalayan women who practise in the Tibetan tradition had to go to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, or in more recent years to the USA, France or India to receive the Bhikshuni ordination (Gelongma). Not all of the nuns can avail of this opportunity due to financial and social constraints. However, the Department of Religion and Culture of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile has been doing research on introducing Bhikshuni ordination into the Tibetan tradition since the early 1980s, and has come to the conclusion that it is possible to revive the full ordination to nuns within Tibetan Buddhist lineage. The process is still under discussion (Allione, 1984; Bouchar, 2007; Chodron, 2014).

reality more deeply. A range of studies of Tibetan Buddhist nuns in the Himalayan regions has shown that the lower status of nuns in the monastic institutions has a negative influence on society's view towards the nuns in terms of showing respect and giving support (Gutschow, 2004; Tsomo, 1999, 2004).

However, there is an alternative perspective to this view. Nirmala S. Salgado's (2013) *Buddhist Nuns and Gendered Practice: In Search of the Female Renunciant* is one of the examples of a view that radically challenges the liberal feminist frame with which nun's inequality in Buddhist monastic institutions has been portrayed. Unlike Gross or other feminist scholars who have relied on texts or empirical evidence to support their conclusions on the inequality nuns experience, Salgado draws attention to the influence of colonialist discourse in positioning the nuns in 'a secular-liberal narrative that does not measure up to their lived lives' (Salgado, 2013, p. 10). In this narrative of female inequality and deprivation, the liberal feminist projection of agency, empowerment and equality have dominated more than the daily lives and perspective of the Asian nuns. Following Mahmood (2005), Salgado breaks the Western dualistic binary between "subordination and subversion" in understanding the empowerment of Sri Lankan nuns and marks the inadequacy of the liberal framework in capturing the agency exercised by the pious women in embracing submissiveness and modesty to exercise their religious freedom.

However, over the years, there have been some changes in Tibetan Buddhist institutions including opening teaching and degrees to women which they were not allowed to have before (Tsomo, 2013). As signs of Tibetan Buddhist institutions' flexibility, Buddhist nuns have been given scope to participate in the Buddhist philosophical debate as well as highest scholarly degree *Geshe* in recent years (Corona, 2007). There are several factors that have influenced this change. These factors include a worldwide movement like *Sakyadhita* for women's equal status in Buddhist

society, a strong voice of the renowned Buddhist women teachers, and sincere interest of the male monastic leaders to uplift women's status in the monastic institutions (Bouchar, 2007; Cowie, 2007; Karmapa Official Website, 2015; Lion's roar, 2009; Tsomo, 2007; Tsedroen, 2013).

The status of a nun in the monastic institution goes back to the time of Lord Buddha – several centuries before the Christian era began. Sakyamuni Buddha included women in the monastic community upon requests under special conditions (Chodron, 1988; Tsomo, 1999). Lord Buddha's approach to include women in the monastic order can be viewed in different ways. I.B. Horner (1930) in her book *Women Under Primitive Buddhism* provided a perspective that Buddha's approach was due to dominant cultural expectations and the Hindu social system that projected women's image as child-bearers and were devoted to their family. His way of accepting the ordination of nuns, after expressing reluctance and imposing special conditions, was a compromise with the dominant groups in the society, allowing women to enter into *Sangha*. Feminist scholar Dr Rita Gross has questioned this inclusion process, while Sister Chan Khong, a nun, teacher and social activist from Vietnam has seen this process as a culturally sensitive way to include woman in the monastic institution in society (Gross, 1993 a; Senauke & Moon, 1994). From these different views, it would be too facile to judge whether Asian woman and Western women differ on this issue in general. In my opinion, although most of the women nuns, practitioners and academics, regardless of East or West, might agree that a nun should have equal access to monastic education and status, they might have differences of opinions about the process of implementing equality in the monastic setting. The Department of Religion and Culture of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile has been doing research on introducing Bhikshuni ordination into the Tibetan tradition since the early 1980s, and has come to the conclusion that it is possible to revive the full ordination of nuns

within the Tibetan Buddhist lineage. The process is still under discussion (Allione, 1984; Bouchar, 2007; Chodron, 2014).

After considering the scholarly outputs, it could be contended that feminist paradigms have considered a nun's inequality as not inherently in Buddhism and more like baggage absorbed from time bound cultural context. From a modern Buddhist's view, their approach can be criticized as western imagination interpreting Buddhism to fit into the needs and desires of a modern society that pledges for a certain kind of equality. However, I have noticed a deep ambivalence that women might feel about this issue. This ambivalence is left unmentioned in scholarly discussions. This observation springs from my personal views as well as my meeting with many women seekers in retreats and Buddhist teachings. To women seekers like myself who have an immense appreciation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's way of working with social concerns and general devotion to the Buddhist institutions and Buddha's decisions, this way of dealing with the issues in the monastic institutions in the past as well as in the present situation invokes a mixed feeling. This response cannot be categorized into a category. Personally, I think H.H's approach is giving Buddhist nuns wider access to monastic education and uplifting their monastic status in a very gradual way without invoking anger and discontent on the part of conservative groups in the monastic institutions and community. Due to its culturally sensitive nature, the process may appear slow, but its grounding remains extremely strong. On the other hand, I also wonder whether leaders like His Holiness the Dalai Lama or other monastic leaders could make this process a bit swifter! Unconsciously, there is a negotiation between my feminist values and Guru devotion based on spontaneous love and understanding. This ambivalence and negotiation can only be captured through a more open-ended framework within which women's personal feelings and beliefs are expressed and paradoxes and inconclusiveness of a spiritual seeker's life is respected.

## **Feminist Buddhist Subjectivity: Suffering, Freedom and “Emptiness”**

Woman’s subjectivity is crucial to feminist politics (Klein, 1995). Feminist scholarly engagement with Buddhism has taken into account this important aspect of feminist Buddhist partnership. Buddhist concepts of suffering and freedom are related to the human subjectivity in the Buddhist paradigm. A feminist approach to suffering is more focused on patriarchal oppression, while Buddhist understanding of suffering is based on the human condition and vulnerability. According to Gross, a Buddhist approach to suffering has the potential to go beyond patriarchal oppression (Gross 1986, 1993 a; 1998). In this regard, the meeting between feminist views and Buddhist approaches can express a higher meaning of freedom – a freedom that liberates someone not only from patriarchal oppression but also from the destructive emotions of the mind.

Women’s subjectivity ingrained in a Tibetan Buddhist paradigm is inextricably connected to the Tibetan Buddhist concept of “emptiness” (Klein, 1995). In order to explain this subjectivity and how feminists have utilized this concept to the question of women’s selfhood, Tibetan Buddhist views on “emptiness” need to be unlocked further. Tibetan Buddhist explanation on emptiness is based on two interrelated aspects – at the ultimate level and at the conventional level (Klein, 1995; Shaw, 1994). Although everything, including self and all phenomena, exists as relational, interdependent, and conditional ways at the conventional level, the ultimate level is beyond all forms and conceptions (Klein, 1995). It should be noted that although emptiness is considered to be “void” for the purpose of the conventional world, this state is an inexpressible spiritual dimension beyond any language. In Buddhism, emptiness is not about a nihilistic attempt to discard everything as valueless and meaningless. Rather it is considered to be the wisdom of knowing and being that has the capacity to complement compassion in the path to spiritual awakening (Klein, 1995). How can a view that sounds almost akin to nihilism complement

compassion? Here comes the importance of experience oriented knowing of emptiness through practice. Through a consistent spiritual practice, one can recognize this innate wisdom within oneself. One can experience a way of being which is aware of the impermanence of all the concepts, thoughts, complexities and emotions within oneself, at the same time beyond all the transience and complexities of conventional reality. Emptiness refers to multilayered aspects of wisdom including being aware of the lack of inherent existence of self and phenomena, the wisdom to realize interdependence of everything<sup>9</sup>, innate awareness, and primordial purity of mind. In this experience, there remains no opposition between the conventional and conditional sense of having different identities and going beyond all forms, categories and identities at the ultimate level (Byrne, 2004). A practitioner on the path can experience the two levels simultaneously in a non-dual way without discarding either of them. This deep insight into impermanence, conditions and interdependence brings a special compassion for oneself and others on the basis of interconnection, vulnerability, and shared humility.

Buddhist views on subjectivity have offered a new potential to feminist scholars (Gross, 1993 a, 1999; Klein, 1995; Shaw, 1994). Feminist scholars have found that this subjectivity facilitates compassion, kindness and more positive emotions in relation to the outer world. According to a feminist view of this subjectivity, women can take a political position based on gender, race, class, and at the same time go beyond all categories in an ultimate sense (Gross, 2010). This political position is critical and non-adversarial, and grounded in inner calmness, tranquility, peace, and wisdom. It promotes more harmony, understanding, and dialogue in articulating critical consciousness. Gross (1981) has shared how Buddhist practice has gradually assisted her to

---

<sup>9</sup> Different schools of Tibetan Buddhism have their own ways to explain emptiness. I have used the view of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism due to my personal affiliation with the teaching of this school.

express critical thoughts with more control over her negative emotions (p.74). Her critical expressions became deeper, more insightful and received wider acceptance than before.

### **The “Feminine” in Tibetan Buddhism**

In Tibetan Buddhism, male and female enlightened figures are used to contemplate different aspects and dynamics of enlightened wisdom. This demonstrates the potential of divine female figures in Tibetan Buddhism and its relation to woman’s subjectivity. In Tibetan Buddhist practice female deities represent the feminine principle (Allione, 1984; Gross, 1998; Klein, 1995; Shaw, 1995). According to the feminist view, women’s connection with these Goddess figures or the female aspects of the divine has worked as a spiritual empowering process for woman seekers in a patriarchal culture where women’s images are ignored in the religious pantheon (Allione, 1984; Klein, 1995). However, the concept of the feminine invokes an intellectual apprehension of enforcing the essential categories of a woman. In this regard, it should be considered that the feminine principle in Tibetan Buddhist practice is perceived not as an essential quality (Gross, 1998). Female deities as representations of the feminine principle are contemplated as a “quality” and “form” in a non-dual complementary relationship with the masculine “quality” and “form”. In the *Tantric* realm of Tibetan Buddhism, “masculine” quality refers to fearless compassion and actions based on the realization of limitless awareness and skillful enlightened action, while feminine quality refers to the qualities like awareness, bliss, and spaciousness (Simmer-Brown, 2002). Masculine and feminine forms are represented by male and female. In a *Tantric* world, the feminine is not used with the intention to objectify and inferiorize women, rather as a quality within us to be aware of and to value.



It would be naive to think that form and formlessness are not in a hierarchical relationship in Tibetan Buddhism. Although Tibetan Buddhism views the highest wisdom of “emptiness” as beyond all concepts and figures in the ultimate level, it uses Buddha’s forms to contemplate that ultimate state. From a dualistic point of view, this may sound contradictory. But it should be noted that Tibetan Buddhist practice aims at breaking the dichotomy and dualism between static categories like feminine/masculine, subject/object, form/formless, separate/together, monolithic/multiplicity, and sacred/profane (Gross, 1984; Klein, 1995). The boundaries between these categories in Tibetan Buddhism are open, fluid and interrelated (Klein, 1995). Although a conventional reality, along with its forms, is considered to be constructed and conditioned, it is immensely valued in spiritual practice. In Tibetan Buddhism, we find different figures of Buddha to represent various aspects of the enlightened mind. It can appear confusing since ultimate reality is beyond any form. But the various forms of Buddha are skilfully contemplated to go beyond all the conceptions about forms at the ultimate level. Thus Tibetan Buddhist practice provides insight into non-dual and interdependent relationships between form and formless aspects of the enlightened mind. This insight needs to be taken into consideration to understand the concept of “feminine” in Tibetan Buddhism. Female Buddha like *Tara* or *Vajrayogini* is visualized with a proper motivation<sup>10</sup> and a constant awareness that the female forms are empty of any conceptual essence in ultimate nature (Klein, 1995; The Dalai Lama, 2014). Without this view, one may fall into the trap of identifying oneself with female deities in an essential sense and develop a sense of false pride and confusion.

The feminine principle as a relational category is found in the form of *Dakini*, the female Buddha and the Great Mother in Tibetan Buddhism. The ultimate wisdom is considered to be the blissful

---

<sup>10</sup> With an altruistic intention to gain spiritual wisdom.

void from which all phenomena arise. It is akin to a woman's embodiment as a mother who nurtures the child in the womb, gives birth and takes care of it. The great mother *Prajnaparamita* symbolizes the ultimate wisdom from which all Buddhas take birth (Allione, 1984; Allione, 2016; Simmer-Brown, 2002). Often *Dakini*, female Buddha, and the Great Mother are used interchangeably to refer to the connection with the dynamic feminine principle on multiple levels.

In the *Tantric* aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, feminine and masculine are seen in different yet non-dual ways. The dynamic quality of wisdom of emptiness is represented through female deities and the quality of compassion or "skillful means" is represented through masculine deities. It should be noted that compassion is closely associated with skillful means in Tibetan Buddhism. It denotes that compassion should not be stupid for taking advantage or making oneself weak. Compassion should be the source of strength, and strategic enough to create harmony and peace. The polarities between feminine and masculine should not be confused as essential, fixed and static. However, it is debatable to what extent this polarity can serve women's political purpose. Before addressing this concern, it is necessary to understand how this polarity is understood from the *Tantric* perspective of Tibetan Buddhism. This understanding goes beyond a dualistic and fixed approach. As different aspects of the enlightened mind, the relationship between feminine and masculine in Tibetan Buddhism is seen as non-dual, together-yet-separate, the two-in-one to represent the wholeness of enlightened mind (Gross, 1984; p. 86). According to Simmer-Brown, the 'concepts of "feminine" and "masculine" have been important only to the extent that they reflect this ultimate dynamic in ritual and meditation' (Simmer-Brown, 2002, p. 33). Simmer-Brown (2002, p. 33) explains this complicated concept more elaborately in the following way:

The "feminine" refers to the limitless, ungraspable, and aware qualities of the ultimate nature of mind; it also refers to the intensely dynamic way in which that awareness undermines concepts, hesitation, and

obstacles in the spiritual journeys of female and male Vajrayana practitioners. The "masculine" relates to the qualities of fearless compassion and actions that naturally arise from the realization of limitless awareness, and the confidence and effectiveness associated with enlightened action. From this sacred view, the embodied lives of ordinary men and women can be seen as a dynamic and sacred play of the ultimate expressing itself as gendered physical bodies, their psychologies, and their states of mind. For traditional Tibetan Buddhism, this dynamic is merely one among a universe of polarities that are ordinarily taken as irreconcilable. For the mind ensnared in dualistic thinking, these polarities represent the endless dilemmas of life; for the mind awakened to the patterns of cyclic existence, these extremes do not differ from each other ultimately. Seeing through the seeming duality of these pairs, using the methods of Vajrayana practice, transforms the practitioner's view.

In terms of the feminine principle in Tibetan Buddhism, *Dakini* has drawn great interest from feminist scholars (Simmer-Brown, 2002; Willis, 1987a). Feminist literatures have seen *Dakini* as a multilayered phenomenon. As a wisdom of non-dual principle she cuts through the dualistic approach of mind and heals all negative emotions. As a mystic messenger she appears as deity and trickster in guiding the practitioner; as feminine divine she is worshipped as power and dynamic of wisdom, and as a woman she is often associated with outstanding female practitioners, consorts of great masters (Jacoby, 2015; Klein, 1995; Simmer-Brown, 2002; Willis, 1987a). Meditation on deities like *Dakini* as well as any Buddha in Tibetan Buddhism cannot be explained on the basis of a dualistic view of deity versus human. In Tibetan Buddhism, the boundary between the sacred and human world is open (Klein, 1995; Shaw, 1994). This does not mean there is no boundary at all and everything is treated in the same way. The openness of boundaries refers to the fluid and conditioned nature which radically challenges the dualistic view to understand reality. Deities like *Dakini* as representation of the dynamic quality of enlightened wisdom is meditated upon to go beyond the dichotomy between mediator as self versus deity as the other. Through identifying with the deity, a seeker's finite self converges with infinite enlightened wisdom which the deity

represents. This convergence should not be confused with a merging where a person loses his/her individuality and the deity overtakes everything. Rather this convergence is experienced as a discovery of one's own enlightened wisdom in the form of the deity within oneself. Meditating on the *Dakini* figure and identifying with the wisdom she represents, both men and woman can explore a special way of being. This way of being goes beyond Cartesian dualism, the binary relationship between subject and object, and awakens to an inexpressible non-conceptual wisdom mind (Simmer-Brown, 2002). Tibetan Buddhism is full of stories where *Tantric* spiritual masters and practitioners encountered *Dakini* in a woman's form and that encounter opened their minds to higher spiritual wisdom (Simmer-Brown, 2002; Shaw, 1995). These tales signify the importance of the feminine principle and its embodiment in the Tibetan Buddhist path. Many feminists including Judith Simmer-Brown, Rita Gross<sup>11</sup>, Anne Klein and Tulstrim Allione, have found the value of female embodiment through the forms of female deities in Tibetan Buddhism (Allione, 1984; Gross, 1986; Gross, 1998; Shaw, 1994; Simmer-Brown, 2002). In this thesis, I will explore how I experienced a new subjectivity through this feminine principle and learnt to value women's wisdom and feminine principles in the qualities like nurturance, openness and dynamic presence in both spiritual and the ordinary calling of life. Like many feminist women, I have found recognition of the feminine principle among both men and women can bring more balance in both outer and inner life and facilitate a healthy spiritual journey. This recognition is particularly important in a patriarchal society which prioritizes the masculine principle and subverts the feminine principle as inferior. However, I also take into consideration that the concept of

---

<sup>11</sup> However, in a recent article, Gross (2015) has taken a slightly different approach in terms of recognition of the feminine principle. Gross is found to be more apprehensive of the risks of this principle for bringing an essentialist meaning to gender and promoting androcentric ideas (Gross, 2015, p.275).

“feminine” may be at risk of being co-opted for furthering the patriarchal agenda. My opinion is that any monolithic approach may overlook women’s relationship to concepts like “feminine” and Goddess. Feminist paradigms should value the plurality and heterogeneity in exploring how these concepts work in women’s real life, what purpose these concepts serve and how women give meaning to it. However, the problematic aspect of a concept like “feminine” is inexhaustible. Yet it is undeniable that the feminine is a powerful aspect of women’s embodiment. In subsequent chapters the concept of feminine will be further explored through the conversation between Naomi and Sharin. The feminine principle and female deities are inextricably related to the *Tantric* part of Tibetan Buddhism which I am going to discuss next. It will further strengthen feminist grounding of Tibetan Buddhism through clarifying some misunderstandings about women’s role in *Tantric* Buddhism.

### **Feminist Excavation of the *Tantric* part of Tibetan Buddhism**

The feminine principle and female deities are inextricably related to the *Tantric* part of Tibetan Buddhism<sup>12</sup> which speaks highly of women (Allione, 1984). It is the *Tantric* part of Tibetan Buddhism which believes that if a woman generates aspiration for enlightenment, she can develop spiritual realization faster than men (Changchub & Nyingpo, 2000; Gross, 1993 a; Shaw, 1994). Unlike the *Sutra* aspects of Buddhism, the *Tantric* part of Buddhism did not originate in celibate monastic institutions which were devoid of women. The *Tantric* practice was developed among lay men and women, and women made a strong contribution in its development (Shaw, 1994). Shaw’s work (1994) makes the point that women in ancient *Tantric* Buddhism have often been

---

<sup>12</sup> Please see the previous section ‘Glimpse of Tibetan Buddhism’ on the explanation of *Tantric* and *Sutra* aspects of Tibetan Buddhism.

portrayed by many Western scholars as promiscuous, unfortunate, objects of pleasure and sexually available. This projection came from a particular scholarly view of studying religion from a Eurocentric framework, especially the Cartesian dualistic view of the separation between body/mind/spirit, subject/object and outer/inner (Masuzawa, 2005). Shaw (1994) has suggested that *Tantric* practice is unique and bears little resemblance to Western epistemologies and ontologies. It cannot be reduced to a dualistic way of thinking like male versus female, domination versus suppression and so on. In a *Tantric* non-dual approach to reality, everything is interrelated, mutually interdependent and works as a matrix. The same approach is applicable to the male-female relationship in the *Tantric* worldview.

Through Shaw's work, I came to know that ancient Buddhist scholars like Atisa (one of the founders of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism) had a woman Guru who bestowed on him *Tantric* teachings, and the majority of the eighty male 'great adepts or Mahashiddhas' of India had female companions (Shaw, 1994, p. 26 and p. 74). I also came to know that ancient women Gurus initiated many Tibetan Buddhist practices, such as fasting and special practice for long life.

Feminist scholarship has revealed that although women are venerated in *Tantric* aspects of Buddhist practice, when it comes to the institution and cultural practices, women can be subject to discrimination and other forms of patriarchal influences. From the hagiographies of Tibetan women saints as well as the contemporary narratives (although these are few), we find how Tibetan woman seekers have faced discrimination and gender related obstacles on the spiritual path (Changchub & Nyingpo, 2000; Jacoby, 2015). Even the most widely used word for 'women' in Tibetan is *Skyes Dman* which implies lower birth showing the distance between the spiritual view and cultural practice in a particular context (Jacoby, 2015; Klein, 1995, p. 51).

## **The Value of Experience, Difference, Voice and Narrative**

Although feminist works on Tibetan Buddhism are insightful and eye-opening, they are not beyond critique. According to Byrne (2013, p. 181), Feminist-Buddhologists run the risk of ‘overemphasizing the egalitarian teachings of the Buddha at the expense of adequately addressing the misogyny and discrimination against women that can be found both textually and practically in Buddhist traditions’. In this regard, we need to understand that the personal experience of feminist scholars is not separate from the way they have understood and explained Tibetan Buddhism in relation to feminism (Gross, 2009). As I said earlier, most of the feminist scholars happened to be Westerners. This favourable condition brings some extra privilege in accessing Buddhist teachings and positive experiences in Buddhist institutions. This privilege has more or less influence on the way they explain Tibetan Buddhist practice in relation to feminist issues. In my autoethnography (Chapter 6), I will address this issue in relation to my experience and invite more dialogue and nuanced understanding.

One of the general characteristics of feminist scholarship is to value women’s personal experience as a source of knowledge production (Foss & Foss, 1994). Feminist scholars, in general, tend to include more or less autobiographical elements to resist the exclusion of the role of situatedness in producing knowledge (Gross, 1993 b; 1998). The autobiographical elements in the feminist works on Tibetan Buddhism provide a greater understanding of women’s relationship to Tibetan Buddhism. This understanding goes beyond the limitations of theoretical analysis and indicates the necessity for expanding and emphasizing more these autobiographical elements. Exploring women’s life experience through feminist Buddhist lenses can better discuss the nuances of a woman’s interaction with Buddhism. For example, by reading the experiences of Tenzing Palmo and Khandro Rinpoche, I could see the dimensions that scholarly arguments on gender

discrimination in the monastic setting could not provide (Hass, 2013<sup>13</sup>). Both of the nuns challenged gender discrimination, but their challenges were coupled with personalized compassion and wisdom. Although for both of the women, this challenge became a part of their spiritual quest to practise compassion and solidarity with other women, their narrative and ways of dealing with this inequality have unique aspects based on their situatedness.

Women's stories can influence and inspire them to value their struggles as well as life choices and decision (Allione, 1984). They can bring out a diverse range of feminist issues in relation to Buddhist practice and express heterogeneity and provide a personalized touch in the organic relationship between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism. The stories can give guidance, condolence and hope to treat difficulties of implementing Buddhist values in real life. From the incident of the life story of Tenzing Palmo, one of the first Western nuns, I came to know how she used freedom of choice to decide whether or not to accept the proposal of marriage or to be a nun, and how she used her wisdom and agency to choose an appropriate Guru (Mackenzie, 1998). In contrast to Tenzing Palmo's decision, another Western woman teacher Tsultrim Allione's story tells how she decided to quit her nun's life and embraced the challenge of being a mother and wife while continuing Buddhist practice (Gilland, 2008). The story of Janice Willis, a Buddhist feminist scholar adds further layers of heterogeneity to women's diverse stories (Corless, 2002; Willis, 2001). Willis's story shows how as an African American Baptist girl she used Buddhist insights to transform her activist path from anger and hatred to a more compassionate outlook. The autobiographical elements in feminist scholar Rita Gross's scholarly work show that while feminist approaches have helped her to identify the androcentric attitude behind gender

---

<sup>13</sup> The reference indicates only their life stories, not the opinion I made in terms of the distance between theories and real life.



discrimination, the Buddhist approach has supported her to deal with the issue with much more control over anger and aggression (Gross, 1981, p. 74). This dialogue between feminism and Buddhism also existed in pre-modern Tibet. The second Buddha Guru Rinpoche's consort Khadro Yeshe Tsogyal's story brought out the struggle to do dharma practice going against parent's persuasion for marriage in the 8<sup>th</sup> century in Tibet (Changchub & Nyingpo, 2002).

Lives of Buddhist women played influential referents for later generations (Diemberger 2007, 2016; Gyatso & Havevik 2005) Feminist works have found that Buddhist histories have excluded many extraordinary women's stories and their contribution to Buddhism's journey across different times, places and civilizations (Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, 2015). Feminists have started to look for these lost stories as well as tried to capture the contemporary ones. Vibrant feminist works bring out the life stories of pre-modern and modern Tibetan women. Gayley's (2016 b) work on the life of Khandro Tare Lhamo showed how a Tibetan woman practitioner benefitted people during the Cultural Revolution. Schaeffer's (2004) exceptional autobiographies of Orgyan Chokyi, a Buddhist nun as the oldest of only four Tibetan autobiographies in pre-modern time revealed a hermitess's view on the relationship among gender, suffering, and liberation in the contemporary context (Schaeffer, 2004). Diemberger's (2007) study on the unusual higher famous female incarnation line of Tibet in fifteenth century, the autobiographical and biographical writings of one of the few Tibetan Buddhist women Sera Khandro Künzang Dekyong Chönyi Wangmo and her mystical experience by Jacoby (2014) made us notice the presence of the female agency of the religious and social context of Tibet. Jacoby's work (2015) on the life of yogini Khando Rinpoche reveals the yogini's life as a discrete phenomenon which is reducible neither to the categories of a laywoman nor nun. Her life shows the value of relationships, fluidity in different social strata and strong determination in the spiritual progress of oneself and the community. Diemberger's (2016)

research talks about the Tibetan women who used their networks and high social status to act as patrons of printing. However, Diemberger (2016) highlights that ‘often we only know of these women’s contribution from a brief mention of their names as sponsors at the end of documents. It is difficult to glean what motivated them and how they pursued their aspirations from fragments and traces in sources that were not dedicated to them.’ (p. 302). This reiterates the importance of women’s narratives in their own voice and perspectives which seek to understand women’s relationship to culture, society and family from a more in-depth view. Schaeffer’s (2004) observation makes this case more acute, pointing out that autobiographies by women in Tibet are uncommon. According to Schaeffer (2004), among two thousand biographies of Tibetan Buddhist figures from the eighth to the twentieth centuries, more than one hundred and fifty are autobiographies and among these autobiographies only three or four are by women. This small number implies that androcentrism has dominated both religious institutions and scholarship for centuries. Most autobiographies or biographies of pre-modern Tibetan women were written in a hagiographic style known as *Namtar*, which literally means “liberation”, with a focus on individual spiritual awakening (Jacoby, 2014). Jacoby (2014) thinks that *Namtar* is a distinctively Buddhist genre related partially to the Indian *Jataka*, which has the purpose of strengthening faith and promoting spiritual figures. The biographies of Tibetan women reveal a rich Tibetan cultural, political and social context through folk songs, esoteric philosophy and multiple meanings that deepens insights on historical and cultural context of women’s lives (Schaeffer, 2004).

In all the life stories of Tibetan women, either autobiographies or biographies, the presence of female agency is profound through an expression of choice and autonomy in historically and culturally situated subjectivity. Unlike women who critically engage in altering social and cultural structures, most of the Tibetan women chose less disruptive ways to carry out their spiritual

practice (Diemberger, 2016). These women's narratives are distinct for valuing the emotions and humiliating aspects of life (Diemberger, 2007). The narratives include the vulnerability and helplessness of women due to gender discrimination and stereotyping. Almost all of them had to get married despite their desire to carry on intense spiritual practice. Khandro Tare Lhamo's life shows how she exercised her freedom in choosing her second companion for spreading Dharma, traveling and teaching (Gayley, 2016b), while Sera Khando, who was prior to the time of Khandro Tare Lhamo, could not exercise that much freedom in terms of choosing her male companion for Tantric practice. Her life was remarkable in terms of spiritual progress (Jacoby, 2014). Their historically situated subjectivity often disappoints western feminism's expectations and thresholds (Diemberger, 2007). Unlike a Western linear approaches to individual agency, their agency is relational to community; the object of their devotions including Gurus, auspicious dreams and signs at the same time being autonomous. The female saints are often related to feminine deities as an expression of non-dual connection between sacred and profane space in the Tibetan Buddhist worldview. The subjectivity of Tibetan women, as presented in *Namtar*, biographies, or life narratives, is constructed through interdependence and relations, reminiscent of Buddhism's doctrinal emphasis on 'emptiness' (Jacoby, 2014). This subjectivity should not be understood as a denial of self. Rather, from this philosophical approach, the subjectivity is without essence and constructed and developed through interdependence and continuity. This fluid continuity represents Steven Collins's sophisticated account that even in the absence of static, essential self, there is the possibility of psychological continuity and a particular kind of subjectivity (Collins, 1982, p. 7, 10, 71).

Tibetan women's life stories highlight the relational autonomy of female practitioners which was developed through the negotiation of their desires, family expectations, strong will to benefit others

and taking into account divine guidance and the advice of Gurus. Feminist scholars have acknowledged this distinct non-Western part of agency in interpreting their lives. In this respect, there is influence of the postcolonial feminist works in understanding the Tibetan women's life, which amplifies the necessity of departing from a hegemonic western perspective in evaluating non-Western women's lives with feminist thresholds.

There is growing endeavour to collect biographies, life journeys, and narratives of women teachers, shamans and extraordinary practitioners of contemporary time from Himalayan countries (Jacoby, 2015; Havnevik, 2000, Schrempf & Schneider, 2015; Wangmo, 2015). There are few autobiographies of Tibetan women like that of 'Namgyal Lhamo Taklha' who has led a remarkable life in the service of the Tibetan community in exile, and Kunsang Dolma, who was born in Tibet, spent time as refugee nun in India, and led a life as immigrant and new mother in America (Dolma & Denno, 2013; Taklha, 2011).

Women of colour in Western countries have offered their own histories and experiences to illustrate the challenges faced by Buddhist practitioners in the context of race, ethnicity, class and other social issues (Williams et al., 2016). Their approach grounded in personal experience allows us to analyse Buddhism's relationship to present issues, and link meditation and other Buddhist practices with advocacy, activism and, and humanism.

These narratives have the potential to relate Buddhism to feminist values with dynamic perspectives in terms of the situation of exile, migration, identity and cultural transition. At present, the website *Dakini Power* in cooperation with the *Yogini Project* is collecting the stories of renowned women including Tibetan *yoginis*, teachers and other women practitioners (Hass, 2013; The Yogini Project, 2014).

Studies on the lives of women teachers, practitioners and shamans have shown that life narratives can be very effective in bringing out the complexities, multiplicity, ambivalences, and nuances of women's relation to Buddhist teaching, institutions and communities (Jacoby, 2015; Schneider, 2015). It should be considered that a large number of women seekers in the Buddhist paths are ordinary women struggling to incorporate Buddhist practice into their life journeys day to day. According to the observation of Janice D Willis (1987b), 'unsung ordinary women practitioners, as well as their day to day world of religious practice, have received little attention' (p. 97). It should be considered that stories on historical Tibetan women saints, although undoubtedly contributing to feminist understanding of Buddhism, were written with hagiographical elements (Allione, 1984; Havnevik, 1999; Schaeffer, 2004). Although these sacred biographies serve a certain spiritual purpose and convey inspirational truths, these stories cannot capture the messiness, the nuances, and complexities on the path crossed by feminism and Buddhism.

The potentiality of women's narratives would be further enriched when besides the life narratives of extraordinary women in Buddhist paradigms, life narratives of ordinary women from heterogeneous backgrounds, especially the voices and perspectives of women from non-Western backgrounds, are known through feminist-Buddhist lenses. In reality, Buddhist women's experiences are vastly different based on particular contexts and conditions including race, sex, class and ethnicity (Halafoff, 2013; Tsedroen, 2006; Tsomo, 2008). Although Western feminist scholars have drawn inspiration from historical and contemporary Tibetan women yoginis and teachers, there is a tendency in feminist scholarship to prioritize western intellectual narrative and to see western women as a group with a greater sense of individuality (Donadlson & Pui-Lan, 2015; Gilbert-Chatalic, 2011; Klein, 1995; Koppedrayar, 2007). Buddhist practices for westerners are considered to be more egalitarian, flexible, open to challenge, individual, personalized as well

as rationality based; while Asian models are seen to be hierarchical, community and culture driven, and ritual and devotion based (Baumann & Prebish, 2002; Gross, 1993 a; 1998; Klein, 1995; Loy, 2010; Tsomo, 2008). However, whether these divisions really work in a binary way in real life can be only known through further inquiry into their experiences. Although western women seekers have come forward to write their own narrative and linked it with academic works, the practice of producing self narrative from feminist and Buddhist scholarly insights is rare in the case of non-western women, especially non-Himalayan women from the developing countries. It is true that women regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or culture share common aspects in their experiences due to gender. However, one cannot ignore the difference among women on the basis of different history, culture and orientations to Buddhism (Bouchar, 2007, 2013). This difference becomes more acute in terms of individual experiences where culture, ethnicity and race are assimilated with human's particularity and conditions. Exploring these subtle levels of differences and commonalities can enrich feminist insights of women's interaction with Buddhism. In this regard, women's narrative can reveal the particularity of life where commonalities and differences interact at different levels through complex social-psychological matrixes (Joan, 1991). If this difference is pursued as a 'colonized anthropologised difference' – as another boundary – it becomes limited to a dichotomous view (Minh-ha, 1987, p.19). That is why this difference needs to be explored through challenging the dominant way of producing knowledge which is based on the disciplinary gaze, binary conceptions regarding difference/sameness and categorized framework (Minh-ha, 1989). My research explores this possibility by exploring an alternative way of producing knowledge which can accommodate a non-Western "Other" woman's context and situatedness through voice and perspective. This alternative way of producing knowledge with its creative-critical dimensions creates an interactive space where readers can 'participate in an interpersonal

contact in recognizing oneself in all human complexity' (Pelias, 2014, p. 16). This space intends to inspire the birth of more narratives in the future with voices of difference, heterogeneity, and situatedness for deepening the ongoing conversation between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism.

*This page intentionally left blank*



*This page intentionally left blank*

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ART OF SEEING

#### **Politics of Knowledge**

At the beginning of this thesis I argued that without epistemic disobedience, the non-Western voice cannot survive in a Western hegemonic paradigm. Exploring the organic relationship between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism in a non-Western woman's life is not only inextricably tied to challenging the colonial aspects of knowledge, but also to creating a space for non-colonizing and non-Western voices, narratives and imagination. From combined perspectives of postcolonial and feminist thinking, it can be argued that Western male interests control paradigms and institutions to dominate knowledge production (Pathak, 2010; Perez, 1999; Stephen, 2015). The Eurocentricism of the white Western world plays a crucial role in colonizing knowledge to the exclusion of non-European, non-White knowledges (Calichman, 2005; Titus, 2008). According to Said, Spivak and Mignolo, coloniality is not about controlling economic and political resources, but also about knowledge making through discourse representation, epistemology and ideology (Mignolo, 2009; Said, 1993; Spivak, 1998). This hegemonic paradigm nurtures some invisible rules: one's scholarly insights are judged on the basis of their connection to Eurocentric ideas and Western scholars, and one's expressions are considered to be more accurate and clear on the basis of following conventional positivist rules of linearity, categorization, separation and syllogism. Western discursive practice, although a site of free and critical thinking, cherishes its disciplinary panoptic gaze; a gaze where the observer scrutinizes the observed and remains beyond observation of itself (Sosale, 2002).

Knowledge in this hegemonic paradigm relies more on the approval of some elite group rather than the potential to contribute to human being's consciousness with new ideas (Stephen, 2015). The emergence of postcolonial thoughts, and later the decolonization of knowledge have provided strategic resistances to Western masculine hegemony. This resistance should not be reduced to strategies for replacing Eurocentricism or Western knowledge (Said, 2003). It should be seen as a broad critical praxis to understand coloniality, and accommodate non-Western knowledge through non-manipulative approaches. Accommodation of this non-Western knowledge takes place in representation, voice, style of narrative and epistemic intervention (Pathak 2010; Shome, 1996). In this thesis, resistance to coloniality expands over epistemic intervention, method, and a way of writing. Although this resistance emerged from postcolonial concerns, it would be too narrow to term it pure postcolonial politics. As the thesis proceeds, I will show how feminist as well as Buddhist strategies are imbedded in this resistance. In the paradigm of postcolonial thoughts and decolonization of knowledge, Western knowledge does not disappear, neither its value and potentials are disregarded. It only loses its colonial authority for the greater purpose of bringing equilibrium to humanity's diverse way of interpreting reality. The politics of knowledge in this thesis is embedded in the resistance against colonial aspect of knowledge which is worth discussing before I proceed further.

As I indicated in the introductory chapter, bricolage in the context of non-traditional research, arts-based approaches and performative writing will be the strategic tools to further the politics of knowledge. Since I have relied on a bricolage approach and performative writing to explain the conceptual argument as well as the arts-based approach in this chapter, I would like to give a brief introduction to bricolage and performative writing. In challenging a hegemony that rests on specificity and singular perspective, I find both bricolage and performative writing are very effective. From a bricolage approach, one can travel into multiple paradigms, borrow innumerable strategies from various disciplines, and develop knowledge that opens up

multiperspective (Berry, 2006). This opening makes us notice the nuances among diversified thoughts and radically challenges singular perspective. Bricolage is not about being eclectic or choosing random paths to reach somewhere. It is a purposeful and strategic response to explore research question with more nuances and dynamic approaches for a more enriched conversation between approaches, perspectives, theories, voices and meaning (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012). Steinberg has seen the weaving of different paradigms, disciplines and intellectual school of thoughts as addressing the need ‘in the unfolding context of the research situation. Such an action is pragmatic and strategic, demanding self-consciousness and awareness of context from the researcher’ (Steinberg, 2006, p.119). Bricolage in this thesis is unfolding in nature. It unfolds gradually, chapter by chapter with a fluidity and dynamic movement into the different schools of thoughts and ideas. As a result, there remains no specific and single focus and dwelling on particular scholarly approaches. The potentiality and risks of this approach will be raised many times in the next discussions and concerns will be addressed through a dialectic approach.

Besides bricolage, my writing has been heavily influenced by performative writing in challenging structure, binary and singularity. According to Pelias (2014), there is a difference between conventional writing and performative writing. Traditional writing is aimed toward advancing knowledge through argument and intellectual analysis. Performative writing also addresses intellectual questions, but it seeks an answer to the intellectual question through connecting human emotion and intellect to scholarly ideas. Performative ways value creative engagement through recognizing human complexity and its relation to ideas.

Performative writing is neither naive nor purely entertaining. Performative writing works in the very act of communication linking experience and expression to language which invokes reciprocity and engagement with an unseen audience. Since 1960, performative writing is used

in the humanities and other disciplines to create interactive critical insights, to make alive the ways of knowing, writing and interpreting that would otherwise be hidden in conventional writing and its objectivity (Allsopp, 1999; Espi, 2013). Due to its dynamic and reflective nature, performative writing is very effective for autoethnography. Carver (2007, p.7) explains the reason for this effectiveness:

Because performance is a method that not only shows the complications in one's story, one's life, and one's daily experiences, but it allows for critique, analysis, and expression of differing perspectives, lenses, and emotional paths. Performance can make the raw self real to an audience, with a vulnerability that exists in the very moment of expression.

In this thesis, performative writing involves use of theatrical expressions to make us think deeply about power, knowledge, discourse and subjectivity. I have invoked performative writing through multivocality, creative expression and textual strategies, performative way of writing the titles for introducing each phase of life in my autoethnography, use of images with interactive titles and the conversation between "Naomi" and "Sharin". Performative styles of conversation between "Naomi" and "Sharin" will invite the readers to connect with the ideas as an experience, a union between head and heart as well as resistance based on introspection, imagination and hope for producing knowledge going beyond the hegemony. Like bricolage, performative writing is also a "doing project". There is no prescription or prediction as to how it should be. As this thesis will proceed, the nature of performative writing will become more visible. Performative writing is closely associated with other strategies of this research namely an arts-based approach, dialogic principle, autoethnography, and a fictocritical approach. Altogether, these strategies as parts of politics of knowledge present an alternative way of producing knowledge which explores the relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and feminism in a new way. As a package, these strategies are designed to make knowledge more focused on human experience through a reciprocative relation with readers.

Although the rise of postmodernism has provided scope for alternative ways of producing knowledge, an unconventional way of producing knowledge provides a sense of confusion, especially to the gaze and thresholds of normative academic writing. This thesis is not an exception to this tendency. However, it should be noted that the alternative way through performative writing and bricolage has political, pedagogical and performative purposes in this thesis in terms of challenging the hegemony of Eurocentric masculine model of knowledge and disciplinary gaze.

As I said earlier this PhD. thesis is non-traditional in nature. According to Engels-Schwarzpaul (2016), the dilemma of doing this type of non-traditional research reflects the dynamic relationship between centripetal force and centrifugal forces; as a representation of diacritical ways of working between the Apollonian and the Dionysian traits<sup>14</sup> of thought. Centripetal forces pull inwards to already established research frameworks, boundaries, standards and practices, aim for certainty, coherency, stability and conclusiveness and base themselves in a foundation; while the centrifugal forces pull away from the stability of this established framework, blur the known boundaries and move towards multiple possibilities with inclusiveness and undesirability (Engels-Schwarzpaul, 2016; Rosenberg, 2000). I have reflected this dynamic play of opposing forces through multivocality and dialogical thinking, particularly but not exhaustively in the conversation between “Naomi” and “Sharin” who represent the conflicting voices, positions, perspectives and selves. The multivocality expressed through the conversation between “Naomi” and “Sharin” reflects the struggle, tension, and compromise for balance in defining and framing the alternative pathways. In this

---

<sup>14</sup> Apollo and Dionysus are the Greek mythological characters. Both are sons of Zeus. Apollo is the God of rational thinking and order; on the other hand, Dionysus is the God of chaos and contradictions. Their relationship is used as a metaphor to represent a dichotomous relationship of two oppositional tenets.

experimental and challenging venture, performative writing and bricolage approaches have been the facilitating tools.

This chapter consists of three sections. Altogether the sections prepare the readers to explore and experience an alternative way of producing knowledge in understanding the organic relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and feminism. The first section of this chapter (4:1) ‘Multivocality and Dialogic Space’ explains the pedagogical and political aspect of the conversation among multiple selves, positions and perspectives in this thesis. This explanation facilitates an understanding of the nature of the conversation between “Naomi” and “Sharin” and the dialogical approach for the subsequent chapters. The second section ‘Method of Madness’ (4:2) is about delving deeper into the style of writing of this thesis utilising “fictocriticism”. This section argues for the usefulness of fictocriticism and explains how this style will be used in this thesis. The last section of this chapter (4:3) discusses the research method referred to as “autoethnography” in light of arts-based inquiry, interpretive approaches, and open and non-dual multiple epistemic paradigms.

The aim of this chapter is to undo the previous patterns that could block a spontaneous engagement with the subject matter of the thesis. With the aim of undoing of our previous way of thinking, I am going to invoke a particular way of seeing on the part of the readers in this chapter. In this seeing, the seer and seen become diffused in each other and create new perspectives to reality with more subtlety and nuances. This is the art of seeing with an open-endedness to see more dimensions, more colours, and more nuances; it is about seeing the unknown parts of our known territory.

#### **4.1. Multivocality and the Dialogic Space**

In this section, I will discuss how I have invoked dialogic space as a mode of being, knowing, and thinking and writing in the thesis (Abu-Shomar and MacDonald, 2012). Understanding this space is paramount to connect with the central ideas in this thesis. As a part of reflexive knowing, this strategy relates to the expression of the researcher's subjectivity, the intertwined relationship between the contents of writing and the writing itself. It addresses the inseparability between what one says and how one says it. The idea of feminist Buddhist subjectivity occupies a significant part of this thesis. The profound characteristic of this subjectivity is the combination of an awareness of chaos, conditions and changes, as well as an awakening to the centeredness, calmness and serenity within. I will explore this subjectivity from the perspective of Buddhism, transpersonal psychology, and postmodern, poststructuralist and postcolonial feminism. My aim is to discuss this subjectivity not only in terms of content, but also as a way of speaking; as an embodiment. By invoking the dialogic space in this thesis, I bring aspects of feminist Buddhist subjectivity that originates from a highly complex combination of multiplicity, ambivalence, vulnerability and complexities embedded in postmodern, postcolonial and poststructuralist approaches, and the centeredness, "emptiness" and mindfulness of spiritual practice based on Buddhism and transpersonal psychology. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic principle, feminist premises and Hindu and Buddhist approaches to non-duality, I will explain why I will be writing this thesis as a conversation between multiple selves and perspectives, and what purpose this multivocality will serve in producing reflexive knowledge. This knowledge works in two interrelated ways: it resists monolithic discourses, dualistic binaries, or dichotomized modes of understanding the realities and reductive thinking; and it opens up more complexity, multiplicity and intimate



communication with the readers. Both of these ways serve the purpose of feminist resistance against coloniality and patriarchy in knowledge production.

### **Birth of the dialogic space from a researcher's personal realization**

The birth of this space is related to my personal realization, a desire to express, and commitment to reflexive knowing in this research. To a positivist paradigm, these issues are emotional and outside of scholarly concern; but in a postmodern and feminist paradigm, all these things need to be included for challenging the hegemony of objective knowledge. At the initial stage of writing the thesis, I felt a strong desire to use a messy writing style without any framework to perform an academic politics of challenging conventional way of producing knowledge. Paradoxically, I also felt the presence of an equally strong impulse to bring out the ideas with much clarity, structure and categorized frameworks, in the way conventional academic ways do. I felt the same internal conflict when I wanted to write the thesis as “fictocriticism” or wondered which theoretical stance I should use. ‘To be or not to be!’ The dilemma of choices perplexed me. Certainly, both Buddhism and feminist schools acknowledge this type of human internal dilemma. In particular, feminist schools after Modernism would accept and accommodate this dilemma as quite normal in a researcher's journey.

Qualitative inquiry in postmodern times accepts this dilemma as quite natural and allows the researchers to use this dilemma for developing a new way of seeing reality. Researchers like Tom Barone and Ruth Behar have addressed this dilemma through taking an alternative way – by combining arts, ethnography, fiction and scholarship (Barone, 2001, Behar, 1993, Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008; Smithbell, 2010). This new way of seeing has given birth to new forms of writing and innovative ways of interpreting human knowledge.

In normative academic writings, the expression of desire is overlooked (Flavell, 2004). Following Deleuze and Guattari's views on desire, Flavell is hopeful that when desire can be

productive, creative and a process, the subject in relation to that desire becomes reflexive, fluid and engaging with others (Flavell, 2004). The implications of this new way of seeing “the subject” resulted in individual politics and deterritorialization against the hegemony of paradigms and discourse (Deleuze, and Guattari et al., 1983; Flavell, 2004). Following the paths of making desire and dilemma productive and useful, I decided to express my dilemma and desire in a way that could reveal inner complexities and ambiguities in interpreting realities through critical insights. I became more aware of a reflexive pursuit – a continuous exploration of researcher's values, beliefs, and experiences in answering the research question (Parker, 1999). At this point, I am reminded of Yagelski who has explained how writing is a way of being (Yagelski, 2011). His approach is helpful in recognizing the dominant Cartesian view of writing in the academic world, where self is written as an autonomous and fundamentally intellectual entity through mind/body, object/subject, and self/outer world separation (Yagelski, 2011). This self writes with a monologic tone, conclusive note and unitary voice. Yagelski’s view reveals how reflexive writing is an ontological act, an expression of self as being in a complex interdependent network of everything (Yagelski, 2011). It unfolds through a non-dual relationship between mind and body; outside and inside and subject and object. When writing acknowledges the wisdom of non-duality, it explores its transformative pedagogical power. It discovers how meaning making through writing, being in this world, and outside and inside can reciprocate and relate to each other in an interdependent way (Yagelski, 2009). For me, my way of being, my values, beliefs, experience, research and writing are not in separate paradigms. I cannot separate my writing from the way I experience my feminist Buddhist subjectivity. The very definition of autoethnography is rooted in this reflexivity – ‘displaying multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural’ (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 733).

To me, self-revealing includes the recognition that we are highly complex internally through plurality and nuances of emotions, choices, and perspectives. Contemporary postmodern and poststructuralist views surprisingly align with Buddhist and Hindu thoughts of ancient time on our inner complexities (Klein, 1995). I find by acknowledging the outer and inner paradoxes; I can discover a form of representation which can capture more fluidity and complexity of the living world (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). This exploration can give a deeper understanding of the complex political/ideological agendas hidden in our writing (Richardson, 2000 a, p. 254). I believe that effective academic writing should emphasize voice which is developed through a mutual and reciprocal relationship between researcher and readers (Graff and Birkenstein, 2007). When I became honest in exploring and studying my life with more nuanced multiple positions, I discovered more possibilities for dialogue and debate with the readers (Humphreys, 2005).

### **Bakhtin and the dialogic principle**

When I shift attention from the Cartesian view of writing to writing from complex subjectivity, I acknowledge the multiple voices and their noises and chaos within me. This shift brings me to the paradigm of the dialogic self which is part of the complex dynamic, multi-folded subjectivity that the thesis explores through relating theory to life (Pare and Lysack, 2006). The dialogic self is rooted in Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogic principle in language and compatible with postmodern schools of thought – one of the theoretical facets of this thesis (Pare and Lysack, 2006). According to Bakhtin, 'language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others' (Bakhtin, 1992, p. 294). Bakhtin's view gives us the idea that our speaking is never separate from its listeners and the dilemma, confusion and pondering arising out of the possible interaction. Bakhtin's dialogism is related to the novelist discourse on locating,

organizing and including multiple identities, desires and voices within the human subject through language (Mizzi, 2010). While epics and ideology of poetry have to be hierarchical, canonical and ahistorical according to the rules, a novel can laugh at the authority by being an ‘unstable, undefinable, historical genre’ and celebrate the value of unofficial language and thoughts (Herndl, 1991, p.9). The benefits of this dialogism lie in understanding how meanings are constituted through the interaction of voices including different ideologies of the characters, conflicts and so on. Bakhtin’s idea of the dialogic principle is deeply related to heteroglossia – the historical and social nature of language shaped by different social, professional, ideological factors as well as polyphony. The polyphonic character emerges when multiple voices are recognized as interrelated, interdependent, reciprocative and responsive to otherness with different degrees of autonomy, tension, struggle, and unmerged into a single perspective in an unfinished conversation (Eigler, 1995; Robinson, 2001).

Bakhtin’s approach to the idea of dialogic principles has a huge influence on the development of the dialogic self. The idea of dialogic self was initially developed by Hubert Hermans in 1992 and enriched further (Hermans et al., 1992). According to Hermans, a self is not divided into an ideal self and other partial, limited and fractured selves. It is not the chaos of separate entities without unity or cohesion. Rather the self can imaginatively occupy a number of positions in mutual dialogical relations including multiple “I” and “you” (Hermans and Kempen et al., 1992). These multiple selves can represent others regarding different social, professional, ideological factors in the society. Their dialogue is not necessarily concluded in a resolution; it can be open-ended and unfinalized (Bandlamudi, 2015). In that sense, self and others become interrelated and relative. This way of seeing the self is different from the particular Western ontological way of relating to others in a dualistic way – I versus the other – in complete separation and opposition to each other (Bandlamudi, 2010; Nicholson, 2009). The Bakhtinian perspective provides a way to trace the multi voices behind the narrative,

collapsing the division between oneself and the world, different social and cultural perspectives, outer and inner and the fixed category of self and others (Bandlamudi, 2010; Skinner and Valsiner et al., 2001). Bakhtin's idea of dialogue is not confined within the internal conversation of the author; this approach is expanded further to see the world and society as dialogic construction which strengthens the dialogic principle in the texts, meaning and subjectivity (Bandlamudi, 2015).

### **The feminist dialogic premise and multivocality**

Bakhtin's arguments have supported French and American work – particularly the endeavours of black feminists for a “feminine language” or “women's writing” as a textual strategy (Herndl, 1991; Jackson, 2004). The logic behind feminist resistance in language is in parallel with Bakhtin's argument that difference of language is rooted in the different strata of society. Language in the academic world often occurs as phallogocentric for its historical root in male dominance over knowing and language, and the exclusion of women's way of knowing and speaking (Herndl, 1991). According to Belenky and others, masculine bias is at the very heart of academic disciplines and pedagogy (Belenky et al., 1986). From this bias, fixed and conclusive meaning, objectivity and rationality become the thresholds for validating knowledge. Mastery, domination, and superiority are characteristics of this phallogocentrism. In academic paradigms, ‘little attention has been given to the modes of learning, knowing, valuing that may be specific to or at least common to women, which has strong aspects of thinking that are emotional, intuitive and personalized’ (Belenky et al., 1986, p.6). However, it should be noted that traditional academic language is not only seen as patriarchal due to the dominance of a phallogocentric approach in meaning making, but also grounded in a Western colonizing paradigm which excludes another way of knowing and expression. In fact, Indigenous male researchers like Shawn Wilson have expressed a distance and alienation from

official academic language and its structure (Wilson, 2008). In this regard, the scope of feminine language is not only about giving voice to women, their way of knowing and their embodiment, but also brings marginalized others into the discourse. The special significance of this language for this thesis lies in its power to reveal a particular subjectivity of women through challenging the dominant Cartesian view of writing, fixed and hegemonic way of meaning making, objective knowing and colonized knowledge.

The “reinvented” and “remade” feminine language has various versatile characteristics; for example, Cixous’s concept of making women’s body heard through language, celebration of the way women talk with passion; Irigaray’s multi voices, value of subjective experience, relational knowing, reflexivity and so on (Belenky et al., 1986; Cohen and Cohen, 1996; Jackson, 2004, p.116). One of the characteristics of feminine language is multivocality – a form of depersonalized, pluralized, dialogic and polyphonic language which is in a process of change and shift between voices and discourses (Herndl, 1991). I have used this characteristic in the thesis in multiple levels, especially in the conversation between “Naomi” and “Sharin”.

Returning to Bakhtin, it is noteworthy that his dialogic principle has influenced the further development of multivocality through “polyphony” where many voices come into play in an ongoing conversation with varied degrees of autonomy and opinion, and “heteroglossia” where diversity of speech styles in languages reflect different ideological and social factors (Macovski, 1997; Zimmerman, 2013). In a feminist paradigm, multivocality is enriched through the use of other characteristics of feminine language, such as leaving the sentence open for meaning, unsettling fixed meanings and so on. Henderson talks about African women’s multivocality which follows both Bakhtin and hermeneutic philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (Henderson, 2014). This multivocality reflects Bakhtin’s way of acknowledging the tension and struggle of difference as well as Gadamer's less adversarial way where others are invoked

in dialogue as genuine partner whose extent of alteriority is understood with more interdependent and relational approach (Cesare, 2013; Dallmayr, 1993; Gadamer, 1975; Henderson, 2014). Here self and other have been seen as fluid and relational. This multivocality invites mutual understanding with deep insight into contestation and struggle. Relying on this dialogical strategy, African women writers have explored a subjectivity that neither diminishes difference nor privileges any identity (Henderson, 2000; Henderson, 2014). The way I invoke the dialogic part of the subjectivity in this thesis through the conversation of multiple selves follows this strategy to a great extent.

The feminist dialogic premise in this thesis has challenged dominant and oppressive ideologies, monolithic points of view, stereotypical representation and reductionist view of reality (Eigler, 1995; Sandroock, 2009). ‘Inclusion of disruptive and dissenting voice that results in a critical potential of multi-voiced narrative’ has assisted me to express a subjectivity in the language where multiple aspects of representations and realities are valued going beyond the masculine and dualist model of self and writing (Eigler, 1995, p.197).

### **Dialogic aspect: A Buddhist view**

For me, being aware of different selves and their voices is not only about feminist insight, but also related to the Buddhist way of understanding and training the mind. Through meditation practice, I realized the fragility of an inherent and unchanging self and became gradually aware of fluid, changing and multiple selves. Although Buddhism acknowledges multiple selves which all are interdependent, relative and conditioned, Buddhism does not reduce subjectivity to multiple selves and their dialogue (Klein, 1995). Buddhist practice goes beyond the dialogue of multiple selves and explores a vast limitless subjectivity through inner stillness, peacefulness and luminosity. This is the distinctive aspect of a Buddhist subjectivity that makes it different from postmodern and poststructuralist approach to multiple selves. This transcendence does

not mean multiple voices become absent. It is about a profound awareness of the transience, fluid and relative aspects of multiple selves. This mental detachment gives one enormous freedom and choice to accept the dialogic aspect of multiple selves without falling into psychological split selves confusions.

### **Writing as “Naomi”, “Sharin”, “She”, and “I”: Merging Buddhist and feminist ways**

I searched for a way on how I could bring out the dialogue and dialectic play among different voices and multiple selves, at the same time not to be carried away by their chaos and messiness. I felt that a conversation between two of my representative selves – “Naomi” and “Sharin” would be useful to express ideas in a dialectic way. A question may naturally arise – why are only two selves visible when the inner drama is played by countless characters? I found the experience of “twoness” is an effective and manageable way to challenge the dualistic relationship between different writings, approaches and discursive thoughts, such as creative versus critical, phallogocentric versus feminine; where duality occurs from the fixed boundary between self and others (Gross, 1993, p.198). I wonder whether my immense inclination towards Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism’s non-duality played a role in this way of writing. In these traditions, non-duality does not mean an absence of individuality and difference. In Hindu mythology as well as Tibetan Buddhism (especially in the *Tantric* part), duality is transcended through the mutuality of two (Gross, 1993, p.198). In Hinduism, we found the divine couples – Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati, Radha-Krishna, Ram-Sita – who through a mutual relationship represent non-duality that has the aspects of both oneness and individual difference. They are worshipped as both one and separate. Radha-Krishna, Ram-Sita, Shiva-Shakti are considered to be the same, yet they manifest as different – masculine and feminine in the divine play. In the *Tantric* realm of Tibetan Buddhism, the icons of male and female deities are found in the union to represent the non-duality. In this union, individuality is retained, at



the same time merged into oneness. Through discovering the inseparability, interdependence and mutual reciprocity between two different contradictory and oppositional entities, a non-dual wisdom on life is developed. By using a conversation between two selves “Naomi” and “Sharin”, I bring out my internal conflicts and dilemma and take a non-dual approach to express dialogical and dialectical aspects of self and knowledge production. This non-dual approach to multiple selves and their dialogue neither encourages the fixed, static, unitary self nor invokes extreme relativity.

In this conversation between two selves, Sharin represents the approach behind traditional academic writing and Naomi speaks in favour of a new alternative way of producing knowledge. Sharin’s voice considers the cost and benefit of challenging hegemonic conventional academic ways and reminds Naomi of the conventional rules and structures. On the other hand, Naomi’s voice is an open-ended invitation to go beyond conventional approaches to academic writing and thinking through the habitual pattern and disciplinary gaze. Though Naomi and Sharin have their individual agendas, they influence each other and diffuse each other’s boundary through a continuous conversation, compromise, negotiation, and contestation. Thus their conversation creates intertextuality and disruptions within hegemonic discourse. Naomi and Sharin cannot be reduced to two separate selves who are debating with each other to champion a single claim. Rather Naomi and Sharin represent the infinite dilemmas, conflicts, tension, struggle, negotiation, integration, adaptation and resistance among different discourses, perspectives, styles, approaches and ways in both the academic world and the mind of a researcher. Like any other representation, their representations are partial and limited, yet they capture the dynamic relationship between multiple positions, discourses, voices, and perspectives. As a student of non-duality of Buddhist mind training, I have seen oppositional aspects of thoughts as interdependent, relative and conditional. This approach is reflected in the relationship between Naomi and Sharin. Their relationship is not

oppositional in an essential sense. Rather it is non-dual, interdependent and reciprocative, 'together-yet-separate', the 'two-in-one complement' (Gross, 1984, p.186; Metta, 2010). The non-duality of their relationship manifests through the two, where no uniformity lies in the one and an "alert inbetweenness" slowly develops' between their individual territories (Minh-ha, 1991, p, 234).

I have used the conversations between Sharin and Naomi in some chapters where I felt the tension and conflicts among positions and perspectives are particularly intense. However, dialogue and dialectic take place among discursive positions, voices, texts as well as researchers and readers in the other chapters where the conversation between Naomi and Sharin are not used. These chapters include the ones where I have used single voice "I", as well as the personal narrative of the autobiography chapter where I have used "she". The dialogic and dialectic space nurtures an internal openness through the juxtaposition of different perspectives, performative politics and combining creative-critical praxis. Writing as "I" "Naomi", "Sharin" as well as "she", I bring out the polyphony and heteroglossia. By the play of first, second and third person, 'along with differing discursive tone and styles that inhabit the same voice', this autoethnography explores the possibility of 'the space of "self" as emptiness' (Kaneko, 2006, p.358). This play becomes a site of wisdom from a Buddhist feminist perspective. As I have stated already, invoking this "emptiness" through language is not nihilism, but a deep awareness of flux, transience and changeability of a static self in diversified ways.

I found positioning myself as the third person "she" in the autobiographical chapter, "I", "Naomi" and "Sharin" in other chapters has been quite therapeutic to review different emotional phases of life's journey (O'Callaghan, 2014; Rubin, 2011; Wright, 2009). This complex dynamic subjectivity acknowledges the ambivalence of feminist scholarship which

challenges the unitary self through an ambiguous relationship with it (Flax, 1990). In this relationship, the very unitary self that is subject to resistance is not completely abandoned; rather it remains as one of the possibilities. In a sense, there is always plurality. This ambivalence is a source of strength and utility of a feminist politics of difference, deconstruction and disruptions in postmodern times which makes the question of subjectivity more nuanced and deep (Flax, 1990). This dynamic subjectivity in writing challenges the singular version of self in both conceptual areas as well as the pedagogy of writing. Through this writing, I enact a sense of being in the world with a deep awareness of plurality and blurredness of voices, multiple selves and multiple discourses, and value mindfulness, centeredness and stillness.

Through writing in a dialogic and dialectic way, I merge critical feminist situatedness based on race, class, gender with my Buddhist way of mind's awareness, compassion and wisdom on the emptiness of inherent existence of self and phenomena in a third space. In this space, 'many possibilities exist for combinations of both/and' (Foster, 2005; p.78). This strategy stems from a combination of Buddhist and postmodern and poststructuralist approaches to identity and subjectivity where multiple possibilities are accommodated in temporal zones of the vast empty space of interdependence. In this dialogue, others are related not as an opposition, but as an extent of alterity from oneself in a relational way. This dialogue does not suppress contestation and struggle and at the same time does not abandon the potential for consensus and harmony. Through dialogue and dialectic, the multiple positions and perspectives play at different levels with fluidity, nuances and relativities. In this play, Buddhist ways and postmodern and poststructuralist feminist ways are fused in seeing the different categories as empty of inherent essence. All the categories become relational, interdependent, fluid, yet present, valued and political.

## **Merging the Eastern and Western Approaches**

While expressing dialectic and dialogic principle in my thesis, I am aware that I need to talk about the difference between Western and Eastern approaches to dialectic. Silence about difference is likely to invite the hegemony of a singular perspective and dismissal of other possibilities. I agree and acknowledge that any fixed demarcation of East and West is limited due to an increasing combination and synthesis of Eastern and Western cultural elements and symbols. In fact, the development of Western thought after Modernism has made the concepts “West” and “Eurocentrism” heterogenous. The differences between East and West are becoming ambiguous, relational, shifting and without fixed borders (Dallmayr, 1993, p.528). However, if the differences are completely ignored and not talked about, that would be ‘blanket dismissal’ of the difference of culture (Tamdgidi, 2005, p.189). In the absence of acknowledgment of difference, the discourse can become ‘culturally blind’ and hegemonic (Tamdgidi, 2005, p.189). Knowing this difference is part of a decolonization of knowledge in this thesis – ‘an epistemic disobedience’ to conventional Eurocentric hegemony in meaning making and the style of argument (Mignolo, 2009, p.2).

There is a difference regarding the dialectic approach to knowledge production between conventional Western ways and Eastern ways. As Kaiping Peng and Richard E. Nisbett (1999) explain, the conventional Western dialectic way is based on Aristotelian logic which prioritizes a single claim, consistency, counter argument, negation of oppositional argument and linear solution. Aristotelian logic pursues a categorical syllogism based on deductive reasoning. An example of the classic logical syllogism is: All men are mortal/Socrates is a man/Therefore Socrates is mortal. In the Western intellectual tradition, Aristotelian logic plays a significant role in validating arguments. The importance of this type of reasoning is immense in furthering the evolution of human disciplines like science and law. However, the hegemony of this type of reasoning can also create an obstacle to other forms of reasoning and argument. Traditional

Eastern intellectual traditions, for example, the Chinese dialectic style are based on an appreciation of the nature of reality that is holistic, fluid, dynamic, flexible and full of contradictions. In the Eastern way, answers are not couched in either/ or terms. Here two contradictory positions can co-exist in harmony as mutually connected. Western ways can be effective for finding facts and Eastern ways can be more useful for understanding complex social interactions (Peng and Nisbett, 1999).

Similar to Chinese ways, dialectic and dialogue in Indian intellectual thoughts are to transcend any dualistic position and claim. Klostermaier (2008) notes that unlike many Western philosophies, the meditative reason in Indian philosophical thoughts (Buddhist and Hindu) creates a space for dispute and dialogue which does not move with logic alone (p. 89). Stroud (2004) talks about a particular model of Indian “multivalent” narrative that is found in Indian Vedic texts. It follows a particular argumentative style that is different from the narrative used in a dominant Western argumentative discourse (Stroud, 2002, p.370; Stroud, 2004, p.42). Following Indian ways of thinking, this narrative makes its argument using contradictions and conflicting value structures. Stroud (2002) has seen value structure as a textual framework where various statements analyze and judge some actions as "good," "desirable," "right," etc. (p. 371). In Indian multivalent ways, the point of the argument is not for a propositional claim to be accepted or rejected. The argument and textual strategy lead the minds of the reader to an exercise and experience, to go beyond “yes” or “no” answer and enter into a transcendent and transformative approach to oneself and reality. Stroud (2002, 2004) explains this unusual style of an argument in Indian multivalent narrative giving an example of two ancient Indian texts, *Avadhoota Geeta* and *Devi Geeta*. In both of the texts contradictory value structures are invoked by seeing God and Goddess in separation from the ordinary world, as well as immanent and present in everyone and everything. These value structures are constructed through various statements with contradictory values. For example, in *Devi Geeta*, Goddess is

seen as separate from the world. This separation lays the basis for the master-servant relationship between the Goddess and her devotees. Again Goddess pronounces that ‘in me, this whole world is woven in all directions’ (Stroud, 2002, p.383). Goddess invites the souls to mediate on her, to merge one's finite self with her and experience a vast and infinite way of being. These playful aspects of value structures are staged so that readers cannot reject a single claim and adopt another. Stroud believes that when a Western audience reads this narrative, they will either reject this contradiction as absurd and nonsensical, or ponder the meaning in a new way, challenging his/her value structures. To give meaning, readers need to go beyond the search for a single claim in response to the question whether God or Goddess is separate or immanent in the world? In this pondering, readers will experience the multiple possibilities of going beyond “yes” or “no”, a new way of understanding reality beyond the borders of language, conceptions, thoughts, and judgments. Readers have to use the contemplative aspect of their mind for a new wisdom which they use for connecting with poetry, songs, and arts. They need to experience the fusion, merging and conversation between non-verbal, non-conceptual and analytical parts of the mind to get to meaning. They need to contemplate how contradictions complement to unfold a wider and deeper meaning that is not comprehensible through a single claim or straight forward reading. According to Stroud (2002), this is ‘transcended dissolution’ within the text, ‘permutation of two values structures’, and ‘reconstitution of meaning’ (p. 386).

It should be mentioned that the Western dialectic tradition is not limited Aristotelian ways. This is evident when we consider the thesis/antithesis/synthesis dialectical style most associated with G.W.F. Hegel, which includes the possibility of spherical thinking and a “both-and” approach (unlike “either/or”). There are similarities between a Hegelian approach and Buddhist and Indian dialectic style (Gier, 1983). However, the way Indian (Buddhist and Hindu), Chinese, and Zen dialectic recognize the unfathomable, unconditional and

inexpressible mystic transpersonal dimension of mind as wisdom, Western dialectic styles including the Hegelian one do not. In fact, the nonconceptual meditative dimension of mind has appeared as abstraction and self-annihilation to Hegel to some extent (D'Amato and Rober, 2011; Yeng, 2014). I found Indian (Buddhist and Hindu), Zen and Chinese dialectic traditions emphasise both intellectual and contemplative experiential understanding in terms of overcoming non-dichotomous boundaries and categories. These dialectic traditions invoke mind's contemplative potential, non-linguistic and non-conceptual dimension that we draw on in the arts, music, and meditation (Barnard, 1997). The famous Zen saying, 'do not confuse the finger pointing at the moon with the moon' is the appropriate way to understand how these dialectic traditions work (Safran, 2003, p.25). Here words are means to go beyond the logos of Western philosophy and move towards the contemplative, non-linguistic aspect of wisdom.

Having a human rights and legal background, I found Western approaches to be more appealing to a context for claiming a position. In a similar way, Eastern approaches like Chinese or Indian styles are more useful to understand the human condition in the context of flexible, ambivalent, contradictory and fluid reality and transpersonal aspects. Therefore, the ideal might be a combination of both — the synthesis of Eastern and Western ways of thinking (Pen & Nisbett, 1999, p. 751). My narrative cherishes both the Eastern and Western approaches, yet it can be questioned whether I have prioritized any particular approach for the particular moment. I would like to leave this question open to invite more thought and dialogue in knowledge production in a culturally fluid performative third space.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that in this thesis dialogue is woven not only in terms discursive perspectives but also in the way reality is constructed, time is framed, and life experiences are shared. In this dialogue, sameness and difference are present simultaneously. Nothing is separable, yet distinguishable. All the perspectives and positions are in conversation

with others, producing a dynamic phenomenon that is always becoming. As part of dynamic subjectivity, the narrative in this thesis reflects the dialogical self. Like the narrative of the dialogic self, it is open-ended (Bandlamudi, 2010, p. 98). What matters more here than a well-defined structure is the ‘dialogic angle between texts, the different school of thoughts, experience and present experience’ (Bandlamudi, 2010, p.98). As a result, there is always a systemization which is a process of development of dialogic self ‘traversing through various cultural space and temporal zone’ (Bandlamudi, 2010, p. 98).

A monologic reading based on an essential, binary, conclusive and reductionist view, or a radical postmodern approach would overlook the intention behind this writing for invoking non-dual relationship between the categories and fluidity of life, and valuing creative possibilities for harmony among multiple positions and representations. However, if this writing is read with diffusional insight with a simultaneous focus on the individual voices as well as their interdependent interaction for holistic meaning, this writing offers a very engaging way of producing knowledge with a reflection on an intrasubjective engagement with the intersubjective aspects of self, culture and society (Henderson, 2000).



## 4:2. “Method of Madness”

In the chapter ‘Towards a Conversation’ under the title ‘The Call of Feminine, the Call of Creativity’ I explained why I required fictocriticism as a more flexible and accommodative framework of writing to invoke the feminine approach, creative impulse, reflexive knowledge and the dynamic subjectivity. In the following conversation section, Naomi and Sharin explore how fictocriticism is different from normative academic writing. The aim of this conversation is to facilitate an expansion of the boundary of unconventional writing in this thesis and to challenge the disciplinary gaze.

Sharin: I am interested to know what “fictocriticism” is! Say whatever you want to say, but remember – ‘breaking rules still refers to rules’ (Minh-ha, 1991, p. 59).

Naomi: In traditional academic writing, you always follow a certain structure or style to make it different from fiction. Isn’t that so?

Sharin: Of course! That is how academic knowledge has been produced for centuries. You need to be specific, rational, linear, objective, and you have to write in a way that does not sound like fiction. Whatever you say, you need to back up with a theory and precedents. However, there has been some change; for example, there is increasing value of being subjective after the emergence of postmodernism. But, these works usually do not cross the boundary and their writings do not look completely “non-academic”.

Naomi: Fictocriticism is a provocation to cross the boundary further through innovative ways of blurring the categories of writings. These texts and styles dissolve the individual static

characteristics of different genres; such as destabilizing the difference between creative/critical and theoretical texts, and questioning the binary divisions, authority and mastery over certain reality (Flavell, 2004).

Sharin: So it is a hybrid form of writing – a radical transgression which blurs the genres! (Flavel, 2004).

Naomi: These intergeneric works are self-reflexive, hybridized, moving between fiction (in the sense of invention/speculation) and criticism (in the sense of deduction/explication), and subjectivity (interiority) and objectivity (exteriority) (Prosser, 1999). These writings leave the readers with questions – what is this? Is it prose, or a poem or an essay? Is it a fiction or academic work wrapped in a creative, experimental style?

But let me tell you that these writings did not take birth just to mock the existing academic works. The writers used this style of writing as a way of knowing that identities are subject to historical shifts, and their meanings are in the process of continuous changes (Prosser, 1999). They had to cross the boundaries because mainstream academic writings were not representing their reality.

Sharin: This raises some rigorous scholarly issues, such as the question of representation. Now I can see some potential of this “madness” for this research. Tell me about the history of this madness a little bit more.

Naomi: Helene Cixous's (1976) *The Laugh of the Medusa* and the polemical essay *Castration or Decapitation* (1981) as well as Luce Irigaray's first two books and in particular the collection of essays *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985) initiated the use of erotic texts, which were not usually used in traditional academic language (Gibbs, 1997). These types of writings became visible in Canada from the late 1970s. In Australia, these creative-critical texts became

identifiable in the works of Sneja Gunew, Wendy Morgan, Kerry Goldsworthy, and Marion Campbell in the eighties (Gibbs, 1997). But, fictocriticism cannot be seen as a singular strategy or something that possesses a universal form under its banner. It is a range of compelling techniques of creative-critical texts (Gibbs, 1997; Flavell, 2004).

Sharin: So there arise some unusual mutant rebellious writing styles under a label “fictocriticism”?

Naomi: Exactly. This term originated in Canada and is widely used in Australia. American feminist writers also use these experimental critical-critical texts without labeling them (Flavell, 2009).

Sharin: I understand. It is another postmodern experiment. The explanation of fictocriticism reminds me of postmodern thinker Derrida’s words (1996, p. 80):

I absolutely refuse a discourse that would assign me a single code, a single language game, a single context, a single situation;.. and I claim this right not simply out of caprice or because it is to my taste, but for ethical and political reasons.

Naomi: Fictocriticism has linkages with postmodern and poststructuralist thought. But it cannot be labelled as “postmodern”. Of course, postmodern and poststructuralist thoughts paved the way for this type of writing – the way that can be beyond absolute knowledge, a totalizing and structured system and absolute reason (Schostak, 2005). These heregenous strategies of writings initiate a new way of being, interpreting and knowing reality based on open-endedness, deconstruction, and intertextuality. All their efforts were to resist a system that reduces language to some form of static meanings and pre-existing classification and structure (Schostak, 2005).

Sharin: Do not forget, these approaches were interested in power.

Naomi: Yes, they were! Michel Foucault's view is that power and knowledge are closely related (Foucault, 1990; Jackson, 2004). Power is exercised through knowledge in both productive and constraining ways. Discourse for Foucault can be understood as a specific way to produce knowledge and truth. Discourse can be an act of power that produces truth according to what can be told and what cannot be told. This power is not total, and it can be challenged (Jackson, 2004). This observation has been a useful tool for feminist academics who have revealed how academic discourse is dominated by male forces, their masculine traits, and their rules which often exclude any possibility of other ways of thinking (Jackson, 2004). Feminist works have resisted the patriarchal force of producing knowledge through the inventions of language (Hintikka & Hintikka, 1983). These interventions include making women's bodies and emotions heard in language, use of poetic and fluid words with a rich blend of personal experiences, expressing multiple identities including sexual orientation, blurring the different genres and so on (Jackson, 2004; Irigaray, 1985). The rise of fictocriticism is indebted to these interventions.

Although fictocriticism can be associated with postmodern schools thought, it cannot be reduced to a fixed category. Postmodern thoughts focus on anti-modern, anti-enlightenment and anti-positivist agenda. But some versions of fictocriticism might not have that agenda (Flavell, 2004). I believe fictocriticism is just a transgression of a possibility to think in a different way without binding it conclusively to any label.

Sharin: I see fictocriticism has micropolitics! Foucault's approach is that power is everywhere and in all social relations (Call, 2002; Foucault, 1991). It does not operate from top to bottom. Power works as a matrix. When power is exercised, resistance also follows. Therefore, an individual can do micro-politics through resistance against hegemony.

Naomi: Can I say something? It seems my voice, perspective and position are influencing your language, position, and discourse. You sound less and less rigid.

Sharin: Oh my God! I cannot let it happen. It will deteriorate my authentic academic voice. I better stop and let you explain it.

Naomi: (Laughter) Ok, I better carry on. Yes, micropolitics is present in fictocriticism. For example, Heather Kerr has used fictocritical gestures to resist assimilation to the colonial authoritative Anglo-American academic system (Kerr, 2013). Helen Garner's *Casting the First Stone*, a fictocriticism is based on the real event of sexual harassment (Flavell, 2004). Her work includes creative narrative styles, interviews and clips from media. The political motive of this work was to challenge rigid feminist theoretical lenses in the context of real life sensitive situations (Garner, 1995).

Sharin: Since these works are ambiguous and not authentic, they must have been subject to critique.

Naomi: You need to take into consideration that this criticism originates from a habitual pattern and disciplinary "gaze" which sees academic writing in a certain form. Why should we not explore new ways of knowledge production when the traditional academic writings become incapable of expressing some realities, perspectives, and position?

Sharin: I understand that fictocriticism has lots of potentials, especially in challenging the disciplinary gaze, a hegemonic way of thinking and rigid patterns. I agree that all are parts of our politics for producing reflexive knowledge in challenging the hegemony of conventional ways of thinking in academia. But you need to be more specific in the context of this research. What is the lack of current scholarship that you need this unconventional framework?

Naomi: I remembered how I accessed women's experience through biographies which do not fall under conventional academic literature. From the life stories of women, I not only received the information about a personal journey but also became spontaneously engaged with the stories of the women. If academic works have sketched the map of the territory, the biographies have offered the experience of being there and transformed me into a passionate knower.

Sharin: "Passionate knower", "being there" – I think it is worth knowing about these ideas!

Naomi: Trinh T Minh-ha (1996) pointed out to what I am referring. Citing Japanese Master Zeami Motokiyo (also spelled as Seami, 1363-1443) who brought up three aspects of art and equated them with the senses, Minh-ha (1996) writes, 'seeing was called the skin, hearing the flesh, and feeling the bones' (Paragraph 26). She dreamt of a new way of writing that invokes feeling. When the relationship between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism are to be known from embodied experience, all these three aspects – seeing, hearing and feeling need to be taken into consideration. We can address these three aspects when we can accommodate creative praxis, writings, as well as expressions as a new way of producing knowledge in parallel to conventional critical engagement (Daniel, 1994; Hamilton, 2003; Minh-ha, 1991).

Fictocriticism resists a strong characteristic of hegemonic and authoritative academic writing – demonstrating mastery or expertise over the reality and social authority with a sense that this world is manageable and language can be controlled (Flavell, 2004). As resistance against this characteristic, we can use fictocriticism to invoke engaging ways of producing knowledge based on connection and empathy, where readers can find the reflection of reality.

Sharin: That is how you want to invoke passionate knowing among the readers. But we need to understand that normative academic language has a structure and follows the rules for a purpose. It has clarity, coherency and consistency. It was developed in a way so that people can remember all the necessary information that they read.

Naomi: To me, normative academic writing reminds me of Paulo Freire's banking concept of education (Freire, 2005). In this banking model of writing, one deposits the knowledge with certain patterns and framework. These patterns and frameworks are based on an Eurocentric masculinist approach.

Sharin: Now you are entering into another paradigm – the question of non-colonizing knowledge. I want to keep this section focused on the questions of “fictocriticism” – ‘what it is?’ and ‘how it is going to be used?’ I wanted to move deeper into the questions of non-colonizing knowledge and epistemic concerns in the next chapters. Please be on track.

Naomi: Fictocriticism is not about a complete replacement of normative writing. I am planning to use fictocriticism for this thesis to empower the narrative in a particular way so that the narrative can float between linearity, structure, predictability of academic knowledge and the desire to be nonlinear, fragmented, performative and sporadic in expressing real life. Here, no singular entity speaks over another, or takes mastery over another (Flavell, 2004).

Sharin: Your voice should not be disregarded. It is now calling for a balance. But one thing I want to mention again for the benefits of the thesis. If you label it as “fictocriticism”, it will lose its appeal to mainstream academic groups. It will be counted as a creative experiment. I am proposing that instead of labelling it as “fictocriticism”, you better take a fictocritical approach. It is a more controlled version.

Naomi: What do you mean by “controlled version”?

Sharin: I mean you are welcome to use creative-critical texts, but within an academic structure. So, when someone reads it, it will not appear as fiction or literature. It should sound like academic work which has been presented in creative ways. ‘Yes it is creative, transgressive

and challenges disciplinary and hegemonic ways, but it is an academic work' – that should be the goal.

Naomi: (after a sigh!) If by doing so, it gains more potentiality to be accepted in the wider academic community, I am ready to make this compromise.

Sharin: Thanks. It is not only you who have made the compromise. I have also done it by accepting the creative aspects of this thesis. What we have talked about until now will facilitate crossing the boundary of conventional academic writing. It is like undoing previous way of thinking and traditional academic expectation.

Naomi: Thanks. A quote from Shakespeare's Hamlet can best describe what happened till now and what will be happened in the next chapters.

*Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.*



### **4:3. Quest for the Alternative Pathways**

Through the play of poetic, critical, and conventional ways, Naomi and Sharin develop the alternative approaches for the research method that have the ability to capture the inclusiveness, multiplicity, ambivalence and paradoxes of real life experience. In this venture, Naomi and Sharin explore epistemic paradigms, autoethnography, and interpretivism in narrative inquiry as well as an arts-based approach to the thesis. Naomi and Sharin's questions, dilemmas and mutual understanding reflect the characteristic of blurred genres research with a bricolage approach – the contestation and struggles of multiple perspectives and categories, and a search for the meaning of all these pedagogical plays (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Engels-Schwarzpaul, 2016).

#### **Towards open-ended paradigms**

Naomi:

I am, as researcher, a bricoleur, a maker of patchwork, a weaver of stories, an assembler of montage by which means I construct and convey meaning according to a narrative ethic, an approach to research that is neither naïvely humanistic nor romantically impulsive—nor, by any means, easy to achieve (Yardley, 2008; paragraph 12).

Once you shed insight into the quote with a focus on the term “bricolage”, you could envision how I am going to weave the thoughts for this chapter. Bricolage originates from a traditional French expression “bricoleur” that refers to craftspeople with a particular skill (Kincheloe, 2001; Rogers, 2012). They are the creative people who can use materials left over from other projects to construct new artifacts or “bricolage”. Through this skill, they maintain a distinctive

style that is different from the engineers who resort to set procedures and a list of specific tools to complete their works (Kincheloe, 2001; Rogers, 2012). As a metaphor, bricolage is used to denote a critical, multi-perspectival, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1999 cited in Rogers, 2012). Denzin and Lincoln have popularized this word indicating the emerging approaches in qualitative research for knowing the phenomena from multiple perspectives, including applying competing theoretical and methodological perspectives (Kincheloe, 2001; Rogers, 2012).

Sharin: Well, there is a lack of clear examples as to how bricolage is to be implemented in research (Richards, 2013, p. 6).

Naomi: Bricolage is a purposeful and strategic response to explore research question with more nuances and dynamic approaches for more enriched conversations; between approaches, perspectives, theories, voices and meaning (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012). It is about problematizing more than what is on the surface to capture the complexity and ambivalence (Berry, 2006). It is a doing approach. Once you start crafting the artwork, you will explore and know. Each bricolage can be different from another bricolage project (Berry, 2006). There is lots of unlearning in bricolage in order to learn in a new way – to free oneself from the colonization of traditional research. In order to appreciate bricolage, you need to understand qualitative research's journey through nine moments.

Sharin: What are these nine moments?

Naomi: Denzin and Lincoln have seen this evolution and growth regarding seven moments (Beer, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Denzin, 2001b; Holt 2013). The first moment (the early 1900s) was the traditional period of objective accounts of truth and knowledge. The second moment (post-war years to 1970s) consisted of the efforts to make qualitative research scientific in the same way as quantitative inquiry. The third moment (1970-1986) began with

the blurring of genres which ended up in the fourth moment (the mid-1980s) with crises of representation and legitimation of truth and authenticity. The fifth moment largely expanded the experimental writing and participatory research which were developed further in the sixth (post-experimental) and seventh (future) moment with a wide acceptance of more creative, critical as well as experimental ethnographies and writing. These writings and methods blur the boundaries of different genres like fiction, non-fiction, ethnography and poetic works. In this time of resistance against the colonality of positivism, the researcher becomes a storyteller, performer, and bricoleur who narrates, performs and interprets the multiple aspects of realities with a critical, embodied, fragile, vulnerable, fluid and unsettled subjectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Spy, 2011).

Denzin has noticed some distinctive features of the seventh moment which are relevant to understand our research (Denzin, 2001 b). The seventh moment is a political, ethical, and aesthetic position which erases fixed boundaries among epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics. At this moment, nothing is value-free, and knowledge is closely associated with power. To some extent, it is the negation of objective and morally neutral standpoints. It is a confession of how particular moral standpoints influence aesthetics and standards of judgment. The ethic of the seventh moment enacts an existential epistemology which locates persons in a non-competitive, non-hierarchical relationship to the larger moral universe. It nurtures the idea of new forms of human transformation and emancipation. In the seventh moment, interpretive research becomes a project where the researcher becomes engaged in an ongoing moral dialogue with the subject matter of the research.

In 2005, Denzin and Lincoln added another two moments to this evolution and growth of qualitative inquiry – the eighth and ninth moments. These are the moments of more diversity of epistemology and methodology in research and their contestation, struggle and tension (Berry, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kozinets, 2010). Research in these moments combines

creativity, such as performance, art-based inquiry and political purpose, including the decolonization of knowledge, questioning new liberalism, inclusive democratic values, self-determination of Indigenous peoples and so on. It is the time to look deeper into linguistic, social and discursive structures that suppress multiplicity, complexity, heterogeneous knowledge and other way knowing. I agree with Berry (2006) that these eighth and ninth moments are the moments of bricolage research.

Sharin: Do not forget that Western readers are used to exploring knowledge through clarity and a linear and structured way for a long time. We should consider how we can engage a wide range of readers with our ideas according to their diversified interest including the conventional academic one.

Naomi: I can understand your concern. But remember being concerned and accepting dominance and hegemony are two different things! Clarity should not be a sole criterion for scholarly knowledge (Minh-ha, 1989). Suppose *Zen Koans* or Lau Tsu's words or the verses of Vedic literature like *Geeta*; do they have clarity in the Western intellectual sense? Are they not knowledge? If not, then who determines what is knowledge and what is not? Are only Eurocentric ways of producing knowledge counted as knowledge?

Sharin: Look, it is a big debate. There are huge scholarly works under the titles like "Decolonizing knowledge", or "Asian Epistemology" which are focused on all these concerns. Can we talk about it after we finish organizing our ideas according to Crotty's criteria? These can support arranging our ideas regarding methodology, theoretical perspective and epistemology (Bridges, 2006).

According to Crotty (1998, p.2), there are four questions that represent the basic elements of the research process:

'1. What methods do we propose to use?

2. What methodology governs our choice and use of methods?
3. What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology in question?
4. What epistemology informs this theoretical perspective?

Let's start with the issues of epistemology. Epistemology deals with the nature, possibility, scope, and basis for philosophical grounding (Crotty, 1998). It determines what kind of knowledge is going to be explored and how it is going to be justified as knowledge. We need to be very clear about this.

Naomi: I am wondering why Crotty has not mentioned ontology – ‘the theory of the nature of existence, or the nature of reality’ (Wilson, 2008; p. 33). It is closely related to epistemology.

Sharin: Crotty has not mentioned it separately because epistemology and theoretical perspectives can cover the issue of ontology. For example, positivism refers to an ontology of ordered tangible reality which can be observed (Crotty, 1998, p.10-11).

We are not in positivist paradigm; we are in paradigms of “post” theories – postmodern, poststructuralist, etc. where language, discourse, knowledge, truth, reason, power, freedom and the subject are in the process of deconstruction (Lather, 2006). We are anti-objectivist and anti-positivist. Our perspective would be ingrained under the categories of subjectivism – how subject constructs the meaning as well as constructivism which explores how meaning and truth are constructed through the interplay between the subject and the external world (Faux, 2005; Gray, 2009).

Naomi: But is postmodern thought only about deconstruction?

Sharin: Good point! Yes, postmodern thought is not only about deconstruction, there are also constructive aspects of postmodern thoughts.

Naomi: I am not in favour of labelling ourselves as “postmodern” or something. Because whenever there is a name or label, there arises an opposition. For example, if I label myself as

postmodern, I immediately attract other labels like anti-modern or anti-Enlightenment in a dualistic oppositional sense. I believe if we remain silent about the label of our paradigms, there will be more open-endedness and fluidity.

Sharin: Fortunately your imagination has a name – Caputo’s ‘post-paradigmatic diaspora’ – no paradigmatic home (Caputo, 1987, p. 262).

Naomi: The way you are relating my thoughts to Caputo’s “post-paradigmatic diaspora” brings a sense of uprootedness. To me, the post-paradigmatic diaspora is more about the use of paradigm as a transitional tool without imposing it against one another (Lather, 1991, p. 108). This approach brings an awareness of the danger of a particular framework as a prescription to capture reality. Any ‘paradigmatic allegiance’ including a postmodern one can cause more intolerance and blindness towards multidimensional reality (Lather, 1990, p. 323).

Sharin: Even if we locate ourselves in open-ended paradigms, we need to have some perspectives as guiding principles.

Naomi: The intention of my research is to know the organic dynamics of woman’s life. I want to capture both the messiness, ambiguities, complexities of life as well as the centeredness, calmness, and serenity of spiritual practice. As a researcher, my quest is to search for the ‘naive knowledge located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required levels of cognition and scientificity’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 82).

Sharin: Here comes the importance of feminist epistemology which is comprised of heterogeneous thoughts along with some common characteristics. There was an ongoing paradigm shift in epistemology in the second half of the twentieth century – from the quest and claim for an authentic, absolute truth to an understanding of the nature of truth as situated, a perspective based and discursive (Hekman, 1997). In this movement, feminism made a contribution because of its position in favour of situated knowledge, reflexivity and critique of

absolute objectivity (Harding, 1992; Hekman, 1997). This epistemological paradigm is perfect for capturing women's experience with an anti-objectivist stance. Feminist scholars argue that since no one can be absolutely objective, and given the fact that science is dominated by males, the male perspective has privileged hegemonic masculine perspectives and power interest in research (Koertge, 1995). Feminist epistemology identifies the role of gender, class, and race in the way knowledge is produced and prioritizes women's perspective in giving meaning to their experiences (Damaris, 2001; Jiang, 2005; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). The main concern of this epistemology is to shape the research method in a way so that women's voice in defining the personal experience of day to day life can be valued. This voice gives an insight about the socially situated context of knowledge claims (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006; Webb, 1995).

Naomi: I am reminded of feminist scholar Dorothy Smith, who has inspired other women scholars to challenge objectified aspects of knowledge. As an alternative to the androcentric model of inquiry, Smith proposes an inquiry where the subject is situated and relational. This method positions the everyday/every night world as a problematic for inquiry, investigates the social relations as ongoing activities and grounds us in bodily sites (Smith, 1992).

I found feminist researchers to be really grounded. Imagine the issue of the hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant which the positivist approach idealizes. To break this power relation, feminist researchers argue that this hierarchy can be lessened through a non-hierarchical and "friendly" relationships with respondents (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006; Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). This shows that their approach is based on more connectedness, reflexivity, and introspectiveness.

Sharin: The same approach is traced in postmodern and poststructuralist approaches to research which challenges the objectivity in research through shedding light on the researcher's subjectivity (McNamara, 2009). To quote Patti Lather, 'we must abandon the efforts to

represent the object of our investigation as it really is, independent of our representational apparatus for a reflexive focus on how we construct that which we are investigating' (Lather, 1991, p.108). I believe postmodern and poststructuralist feminist epistemology will be enough to capture the reality and representation that our research seeks.

However, we need to take into consideration that feminist epistemology with a postmodern approach bears the risk of invoking wild experimentalism, holding multi-perspectives to reality and locating knowledge with extreme relativism (Damaris, 2001).

Naomi: These concerns can be addressed through various strategies. In dealing with this tension of validity, one should reflect what one is looking for in the research, how the truth will be presented and what type of claims are made.

Sharin: I am concerned about falling into absolute relativism!

Naomi: I can understand your fear. You are afraid that we might cease to hold a political perspective due to overemphasis on relativism and situated truth. If you focus on women's perspective and voice, and support the idea that all knowledge is partial and situated, you can still be political. We should remember that the value of feminist epistemology lies in knowing the difference, multiplicity, heterogeneity of women's experiences and exploring how women's multiple social positions shape experience (Sosulski et al., 2010). It can help you to construct the reality through plural perspectives which will eventually facilitate critical analysis (Hekman, 1997).

Sharin: In this case, we had better not rely on absolute subjectivism. We should also take into consideration the value of constructivism, 'all knowledge and therefore, all meaningful reality as such, is contingent about human practices, being constructed in and out of the interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context' (Crotty, 1998, p. 42).



Naomi: If our paradigms are open, we can move across postmodern, poststructuralist paradigms and emancipatory discourses to pursue a political intention from a relative and situated position (Lather, 2006). Do not forget bricolage research is not without the commitment to social justice, inclusion, and freedom. In fact, in bricolage research, multiplicity and complexity are valued to resist binary thinking, dominance, hegemony, and exclusion (Berry, 2006).

Sharin: Excellent! I am convinced.

Naomi: There is still an issue.

Sharin: What else is left? I thought we had solved all the problems!

Naomi: We were discussing the paradigms that can accommodate personal perspectives, ambiguity, ambivalence and messiness of real life. But spirituality cannot be reduced to the messiness and untidiness of real life! It is more than that. I think we need something new that has ‘the ability to acknowledge, understand and feel wholeness and connection within oneself, as well as interconnectedness with other creatures, nature and the universe’ (Kawano, 2011, p. 97). I need something that values inner stillness, pristine silence, interconnection, vastness, love and union with the cosmic consciousness that spiritual experience offers.

Sharin: The best place for you is the area of decolonization. Decolonization arises from an epistemic disobedience to Eurocentric epistemology (Mignolo, 2009, p. 3). According to Spivak, subalterns or the marginalized cannot speak in a hegemonic Eurocentric discourse (Spivak, 1988). To bring out the non-Western voice and view, one needs to take an epistemic position with which the non-Western can speak and express their worldview in their own way (Grosfoguel, 2011; Mignolo, 2009). With the movement of decolonization, alternative epistemic interventions are developed to challenge the hegemony of Eurocentric ways of knowing. These alternative epistemic interventions include Indigenous epistemology and

Asian epistemology which refuse to fall under the Western category of the epistemic framework (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Liu, 2008). I think Asian epistemology is a good place for your perspective since it gives a grounding in knowing self and reality based upon Asian spiritual intellectual traditions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism (Liu, 2008). Taking an Asian epistemological stance, you can argue for a kind of knowing which can neither be reduced to emotional and subjective states nor can be properly understood by logical deduction (Liu, 2008). This knowing can accommodate your spiritual and contemplative state.

Naomi: I know what I am looking for is in Asian epistemology. But I wonder whether I should start another dichotomous play in the name of “Asian epistemology”? I better call it “contemplative epistemology” which can invoke a non-dichotomous approach in relation to the West. Contemplation is used in both Eastern spiritual and Judeo-Christian traditions (Hart, 2004). So it sounds non-dichotomous in terms of the relationship between East and West. Contemplative epistemology is a form of knowing that comes from meditative ways, including mindful states, profound silence and stillness, openness, intense focus and clarity, creating detachment with the contents of mind and so on (Haynes, 2009). This contemplative state can be reduced neither to reason nor emotion (Ferrer, 2002). Hence, it can hold both, while at the same time it is beyond. These practices invoke empathic ways of understanding, profound silence, unconditional love, deep awareness, the vastness of the way of our being, interconnectedness and wisdom on a very subtle level of the transience of self and reality (Haynes, 2009; Zajonc, 2005). Listen to what Trinh T Minh-ha (1991) says, ‘between rational and irrational enslavement, there is an interval, and there is a possibility for a third term in the struggle’ (p. 8). That third term is something that is beyond naming and framing, at the same time floats within rationality and emotions, names and frames, categories and various concepts. Contemplative epistemology is reminiscent of this third term.

Sharin: I am concerned! Does it have anything to do with critical reasoning?

Naomi: Contemplation is often misunderstood as something separate from the world and critical consciousness. This way of knowing if combined with critical insight gives a new insight into self, reality and social actions (Burggraf, 2007; Klein, 2995). In recent years, contemplative epistemology is included as a valid way of knowing and source of new knowledge (Janesick, 2016; Zajonc, 2005). It can bring a new interpretive angle to human experience from a holistic critical perspective. This mode of inquiry includes the use of arts, poetry, photographs, and creative writing in the research that share a subtle level of human experience (Janesick, 2016).

Sharin: It sounds interesting.

Naomi: It is! By the way, have you noticed that our discussion has given a fluid and open form to the paradigms in this thesis?

Sharin: I can see my opinion has resisted the directionlessness of your chaotic ideas.

Naomi: I can see our research paradigms have recovered from fixed dualism and suffocation of closeness.

Sharin: Let's move to the next important topic – the question of autoethnography. In this regard, I need some clarifications.

Naomi: Before you move there, I want to talk about arts-based inquiry which will shape and influence the way we want to present and understand autoethnography.

Sharin: Do not bring too many ideas!

Naomi: Can you please listen?

Sharin: Yes, please.

### **Arts-based inquiry**

Naomi: Arts-based inquiry has been developed after the emergence of postmodernism when multiple ways of interpreting reality have been acknowledged as one of the ways to enrich critical insight (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). Art-based inquiry originated in the 1970s and 1990s from a realization that there are multiple ways of seeing, and some of these experiences and understandings cannot be shared through a conventional research experience (Chilton & Leavy, 2014; Franz, 2010; Greenwood, 2012). In the 1970s, art educator Elliot Eisner played an important role in popularizing arts-based education research (Chilton and Leavy, 2014). Gradually, researchers began to use different types of arts, crafts, photographs, poems, and creative writing in relation to narrative, hermeneutic, heuristic, and phenomenologically based perspectives in research paradigms (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008; Chilton & Leavy, 2014; Greenwood, 2012; Nickerson-Crowe, 2005). The examples of arts-based inquiries are plenty and available in qualitative research. I would like to cite a few to show its potential for innovative ways of doing research. Burris and Wang have used photographs in their health-related research to invoke an empathic understanding of the subject matter that has enriched participatory research method (Wang and Burris, 1997). Glesne has applied poetic transcription to her data to explore ‘the shapes of intersubjectivity and examine issues of power and authority including that of researcher/author’ (Glesne, 1997, p. 204). Ruth Behar, an anthropologist, has used storytelling in ethnographic studies on the experiences of Cuban-American Jewish identity (Neile & Behar 2009). There are publications like *The Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, Leavy’s *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*, Barone and Eisner’s *Arts-Based Research* and *Arts-based and Contemplative Practices in Research and Teaching: Honoring the Presence* (Barone and Eisner, 2012; Chilton & Leavy, 2014; Leavy, 2009; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Walsh et al., 2015). In these works, different artists have used their individualized artistic inquiry on social change and global concerns, and paved the ways for new ways of thinking.

Sharin: But arts-based researchers can easily become lost in highly complex personal, introspective and heuristic inquiries or in efforts to do many things with no focus (McNiff, 1998).

Naomi: The emergence of arts-based inquiry has provided human knowledge with special aspects that descriptive language based research could not (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). It can provide various ways of representations and expressions for engaging people at deep emotional levels (Franz, 2010). This engagement challenges the hegemonic way of thinking, stereotyped and generalized concepts, and the disciplinary gaze (Barone, 2008).

Arts-based research tells us that conceptual ways are just one of the ways of knowing (Walsh et al., 2015). We should not stick to it as the only means of human communication. Through arts-based inquiry, we learn to value non-verbal and non-linguistic aspect of human knowing.

Sharin: It seems arts-based inquiry suits contemplative epistemology. Both work on inner transformation. As long as there are alignment and coherence, I am happy.

Naomi: I like the way Patrica Leavy (2009) points out the power of arts-based approaches. Leavy thinks that the way arts-based approach invokes meaning is different from denoting the meaning. “Invoked meaning” is deeply related to multiplicity and ambivalent aspects of our self and reality that come through creative expressions like poems, visual image, painting, dance, songs, storytelling, sculpture and other means. This knowing is not devoid of political and pedagogical praxis. The integration of creative and contemplative expression, and the aesthetic ways in research can bring a depth to ontological and epistemological aspects of knowledge which makes us engage with the subject matter in transformative ways (Walsh et al., 2015). This transformation has all the potential to offer a new insight to social action, critical issues and political concern.

Sharin: Since you are outlining many benefits, I cannot stop agreeing with you to place our research under arts-based inquiry. But there has to be the focus in arts-based research on how the creative parts can be of use to the critical insight (McNiff, 1998). Creative and contemplative aspects of arts should have the interpretive power to enhance critical sensitivities (Franz, 2010). It should aim to complement the rigours of the scholarship, not to make it fickle and romantic without any purpose.

Naomi: That is your job.

Sharin: Arts-based inquiry brings forth the question of postmodern influence on knowledge in very deep level, especially regarding subjective truth. I can foresee this area will be coming in our next conversations in terms of justifying autoethnography and analyzing the data.

### **Autoethnography**

Naomi: I think knowledge of a person and understanding of a person are two different things (Lankford, 2005, p. xiii). Although analytical and intellectual knowledge can provide facts and pictures of the individual, it leaves out the heart and soul of the person. It is through personal relationships, knowing one's hopes, dreams, success, failure, and participating in critical phases and joyful events that one begins to understand a person. In this regard, autoethnography emerges as the entry point to explore the relationship between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism at a very intimate level. It is a research method where autobiography and ethnography are merged; the researcher analyses his or her experience with a focus on the main themes of research and uses the narrative as data to answer the research question (Ellis et al., 2011).

We can use the narrative approach to autoethnography. The narrative inquiry will give us more freedom in avoiding objectivity (Jin, 2006; Parpart et al., 2000). We can tell our experience as the story and give meaning to complex events of our life experiences (Ellis et al., 2010; Trahar, 2009).

The process of narrative inquiry is described as a recursive process and purposeful practice of reflexivity where a researcher shares how their experiences and contexts influence the process of research and outcomes of inquiry (Clandinin, 2010; Etherington, 2006). In the narrative inquiry, the real events of the research process and the researcher's engagement with this process are parts of the study (Trahar, 2006).

Writing about oneself and bringing the self's embodied experience through the process of reflexive insight with a narrative approach have been widely applauded as a liberating process for women (McDonough, 2006; Wall, 2004). When this reflexivity is coupled with life history, it can open up a wide spectrum of experience leading to a holistic and deep insight on women's lives (Metta, 2010; Sosulski et al., 2010). As a result, autobiographical writing is also therapeutic (Ellis et al., 2010). Through writing autobiography one can express deep feelings, share personal memories and fashion the self in a personal way (Ire, 1997; McLaren, 2002).

Sharin: Let me remind you that one needs to maintain a high standard of reflexivity in narrative research (Ribbens & Edwards, 1998). This reflexivity needs to be in line with the pursuit of the research question and theoretical paradigms. I am afraid that autoethnography can be seen just as a personal story and easily judged to be narcissistic.

Naomi: Though the truth of autoethnography is partial, it contains the immense particularity of life (Rosadahl, 2008). In the postconventional period, feminist works have widely used autoethnography as an authentic research method (Tedlock, 2003).

The history of autoethnography tells its significance in knowledge production. The origin of autoethnography can be traced back to 1980s when postmodern schools of thought revisited the ontological, epistemological, and axiological limitations of social science (Ellis et al., 2011). It was the time to question knowledge which was based on objective, single and universal truth. While challenging the hegemony of objectivity and unilateral way of meaning

making, many of these scholars chose autoethnography to ground research in personal experience, identity politics, and critical concerns of class, gender, and culture etc. (Ellis et al., 2011). Tedlock identified a major transformation in this trend with the uprising of the personal and political voice from a position of race, gender, class, ethnicity which was widely used by feminist and non-Western ethnographers (Tedlock, 2003). This emerging practice worked to bridge the gulf between self and other, between the academic world and their cultural experience relating theory to embodied experience.

This venture included deconstructing the binary relationship between public and private memory, between objective and subjective modes of discourse and between specialized knowledge and everyday life (Brewster, 2005). The deconstruction of the binary relationship between everyday life and specialized knowledge is used to understand everyday life as a transformational zone where heterogeneous forms of knowing and doing intersect.

Regarding your objection about narcissism, an autoethnography is not only about a story of one person. It is life story that includes a person's relationship to others, as well as culture. Besides, knowing a researcher's subjectivity is also part of knowledge production in your postmodern paradigm (Lister, 2013; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Isn't that so? If the readers know me well, they can also realize the relationship between the researcher and knowledge of this research. There is a huge potential of autoethnography in unearthing some treasures from a life story which other research methods cannot (Murray et al., 2012).

Sharin: It is my duty to inform you that autoethnography has been criticized for the use of self as the only data source and being self-indulgent (Holt, 2003). Memory plays a very important role in autoethnographic writing, and there is no guarantee that memory will give the exact record of the past.



Naomi: In terms of memory, the self-reflexive works acknowledge that memory is mediated, contextualized, and a discursive nature in the form of secondary revision (Metta, 2010; Monaco, 2010). It is not to be abandoned just because it is not objective. It is an act of remembering. Its repetition is not like the mechanical or exact replication of the same thing (Albertin, 2009). In its every repetition, there lies a variation. An insight into the chain of copies along with the variation reveals the constructed character of identities and social realities (Albertín, 2009). From this aspect, feminist autoethnography considers memory as a performative act in process (Fleming & Fullagar, 2007).

Sharin: I understand that there are lots of justifying points for autoethnography. Still, you need to ensure that you are not going to write a fictitious tale in the name of your life story and memories.

Naomi: The problem lies in clinging to an approach that wants to differentiate between fact and fiction with unreal expectations of perfection in the research (Denzin, 1989). This tendency has been rooted for centuries in the positivist tradition of analysis and criticism (Leavy, 2009).

Listen to Denzin's view (1989) in exploring interpretive biography. In the opinion of Denzin (1989) autoethnography is like viewing one's life like a piece of whole cloth. We need to acknowledge that, like all writing forms, the autobiographical and biographical forms are incomplete in some aspects. When a life story is written, the writing of life is created in every moment. Throughout this process, new patterns are found, and the meanings of the pieces keep changing. The personal pronoun that is used in the texts signifies the person who utters it and becomes a historical, biographical claim. In this way, the personal pronouns make a semantic meaning. The self and its signifiers (I, etc.) exist in both inward and outward ways in the biographical text. Inwardly, they are activated in the text through the system of narrative biographical discourse; outwardly, they indicate the writer or the subject's life. When the reader reads a biographical text, that text is lensed through the life of the reader.

Hence, writers and readers together participate in creating the lives they are writing and reading about (De Man, 1979; Denzin, 1989). Denzin (1989) tells us that it is not that there is no real essence in autoethnography. There is a real person, the author his/herself who has led the life, experienced all the feelings of love, hatred, judgment, passion, anger and become a real subject (Denzin, 1989).

I would like to give two examples on how narration can be subjective. Sally Morgan's *My Place* raised consciousness on everyday reality and oppression of an Indigenous family (Morgan, 1987). When it was read in a class, a student in class challenged Morgan's memoirs. He had lived in the same suburb where the family lived. His opinion was that they did not look “Aboriginal”, and there should be nothing to complain about in terms of “fitting in” (Crawford, 1994, p. 22). This pronouncement provoked a lively discussion among the class as to what it means to “fit in” and what it means to “look” Aboriginal (Crawford, 1994, p. 22).

The famous Japanese film “Rashomon” is another good example. The film gives us four different versions of an incident from the version of four characters who were suspected to be related to the same action of rape and murder (Martinez, 2007). Unlike most mainstream films, the audience is never told which version is true. It brings forward the fact that it is possible to tell one story through various flashbacks, where each character speaks from a different point of view, producing a different scenario of the event (Martinez, 2007).

We are doing narrative research, and it has given us a precious scope for becoming aware of the limitations of human experience as a researcher/participant in the research process (Jin, 2006). In this regard, let me give you an example from the story of Nell Bridges (2006, pp. 98-99). Bridges and her Ph.D. supervisor decided to do an experiment before taking interviews with the respondents. Her supervisor took her interview and transcribed the data. Bridges admitted that she felt vulnerable and wondered what her supervisor would be thinking of her and whether the supervisor had an agenda. This influenced the way she presented the narrative.

When she saw the transcripts, she found that the way her supervisor had presented her story was different from her perspective. The question, ‘whose transcript is it?’ occurred (Bridges, 2006, p. 99). The transcripts represented what the interviewer heard, rather than what she said. Seeing the transcripts of her interview, she could not but conclude that she would not be able to focus on all of the stories of the participants; there would inevitably be some selection. She understood that even though she would never write the “truth”, she could write about meaning, feeling, and understanding. Throughout this process, we find an honest confession of human being’s inevitable limitations in presenting objective reality through research. All these examples make us notice the blurred lines between fact and fiction. We cease from searching for an absolute truth and become more interested in how persons give meaning to their experience.

Autoethnography as reflexive scholarship can bring out the fluid, non-dichotomous representation that values dynamic embeddedness of the self in the world through locating, situating and contextualizing the particular experiences of individuals (Hamati-ataya, 2014). In the long run, it challenges the dominant influence of the discursive power of master narratives.

Dauphinee (2010, p. 806) explains the privilege of autoethnography:

Aside from the vehicle of the interview, which is always crafted by the researcher prior to departure for the target locale, the informant has no mechanism through which to speak back. While autoethnography certainly does not solve that problem, it affords the possibility of conveying something that we would not otherwise have been able to hear.

Sharin: You need my help to make your argument rigorous. The political intention behind using autoethnography as a form of knowledge is different from other research to some extent. The distinction between fact and fiction in the biographical aspects of autoethnography is undecidable in the postmodern and poststructuralist paradigm of knowledge (De Man, 1979; Hamati-ataya, 2014). This undecidability is compatible with the way postmodern and

poststructuralist approaches view “truth” as partial, contextualized, situated, conditioned, having subjectivity and perspectives.

Sharin: I am apprehensive that if there is no threshold, the biography can be like a wild horse.

Naomi: That is why Denzin has suggested that we need to be critically aware of applying the strategies and techniques of recent structuralist and poststructuralist developments (Denzin, 1989). We have this awareness through polyphonic authority in this research. The polyphonic authority of our autoethnography reflects reflexivity through the introspectiveness of the researcher as well as the methodology and epistemology (Anderson, 2008). Our reflective practice is not confined to ‘the feelings of others as they are represented through the author's experience’, it also ‘questions accounts of the self (the author's and the reader's) with the aim of constituting a kind of social criticism and action’ (Albertín, 2009, paragraph 75). If we do not portray ourselves as someone beyond limitations and explore our physical feelings, thoughts, and emotions in knowing the vulnerable aspects of self, the readers will be aware of the possible disjunction (Muncey, 2005).

Sharin: I am still worried! Narrative inquiry possesses the risks of using falsehood and deception in giving the meaning to life experiences, invoking narcissism, over personalized knowledge, lack of homogenized and globalized meaning and so on (Connelly & Clandinin, 2011; Trahar, 2009).

Naomi: Let me console you with Burke’s observation that every insight has its blindness (Burke, 1984). Whatever research method you choose, it is always imperfect and limited. Suppose if you choose another method, can it take you to the interior landscape of human experience in a way that a narrative inquiry can? (Riley and Hawe, 2005) I agree that narrative inquiry is not beyond limitations. But if the researcher remains open to such criticism and

defends the interpretive framework to interrogate the data, it is possible to minimize the risks (Riley & Hawe, 2005).

Sharin: It seems you are not lost. ‘We must show our readers what we want them to know’ (Mitchell and Charmaz, 1996, p. 157). Remember:

For autoethnography, validity means that a work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible, a feeling that what has been represented could be true. The story is coherent (Ellis et al., 2010, para 34).

I suggest you relate your experiences to the aspects of public/cultural issues including the political and cultural phenomenon to be studied (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014; Crawford, 1994; Denzin, 2001a, b). Now we just need to selectively write the experiences that would knit the threads for addressing the main research theme (Ellis et al., 2010).

### **Interpretivism in narrative inquiry**

Naomi: All researchers are always interpreting no matter which research method they are using. Stinson says, ‘we bring our passions, which determine what parts of the world we look at and the lenses we use to look at them’ (Stinson, 1994, p. 4).

Narrative inquiry is a relatively new qualitative methodology where experience is studied narratively (Clandinin, 2010). Stories are told by people; narrative originates from the analysis of those stories; through the interpretation of the research. That is why narrative inquiry is grounded in interpretive hermeneutics and phenomenology (Trahar, 2009).

Sharin: The question is which interpretive approach you would like to use? Because, interpretive approaches are many in number in social science, such as interpretive anthropology or sociology, hermeneutics, cultural studies, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and ethnomethodology (Denzin, 2001a).

Naomi: I am so grateful to Denzin (2001a) and his “interpretive interactionism”! Through this category, he has joined the traditional symbolic interactionist approach with the interpretive, phenomenological works of Martin Heidegger and the tradition associated with hermeneutics. It also has a strong affinity with feminist social theory, postmodern theory, and the critical-biographical method in investigating human experiences in the postmodern period (Denzin, 2001 a). This approach is more interested in the meanings that persons give to their life experiences. These are the meanings that do not become the exclusive domain of academics and their dominated discourse. Rather, they make the lived experience, including the voices, emotions, and actions accessible to the reader.

Sharin: Can you please explain its characteristics in more detail?

Naomi: Sure. Interpretive research extracts valuable insights from feminist critiques of positivism and dwells on the social construction of gender, power, knowledge, history, and emotion. Interpretive research is existential, interactional, and biographical (Denzin, 2001a). In interpretive research, existentially experienced and interactive texts are collected and analyzed. It considers each case as unique. Here experiences of interacting individuals in problematic situations are uncovered through narrative and thick description.

Sharin: I think “thick description” needs to be elaborated.

Naomi: Thick description includes the context of an action, the intentions, and meanings surrounding the action. It unfolds the evolution and development of the action and presentation of the action as interpretive texts (Denzin, 2001b). Behind all these interpretations, the symbolic aspects of all meanings and their operation at both the surface and the depths, at both the micro and the macro level are assumed.

Sharin: Thanks for your clarification of interpretive approaches. It is compatible with the arts-based inquiry. We are on track. Now let us discuss on how to analyze and present the data. I have some models in my head for data analysis.

### **The way of storytelling**

Naomi: You said you have models! I am scared! If you hold on a rigid approach to data analysis, we will eventually confine ourselves within a humanist narrative research which insists on a singular, agentic storyteller and listener (Andrews et al., 2008).

Sharin: If there is no model to follow, there is a potential risk of losing the coherence and appeal of a woman's story amidst the politics of representation of truth.

I have a holistic version of a model (Phoenix et al., 2010). This model has been mainly developed to order the chaos of life story. Based on the feature of the story (what is told and how it is told) and the storyteller, narrative analysis can also be categorized in the following ways:

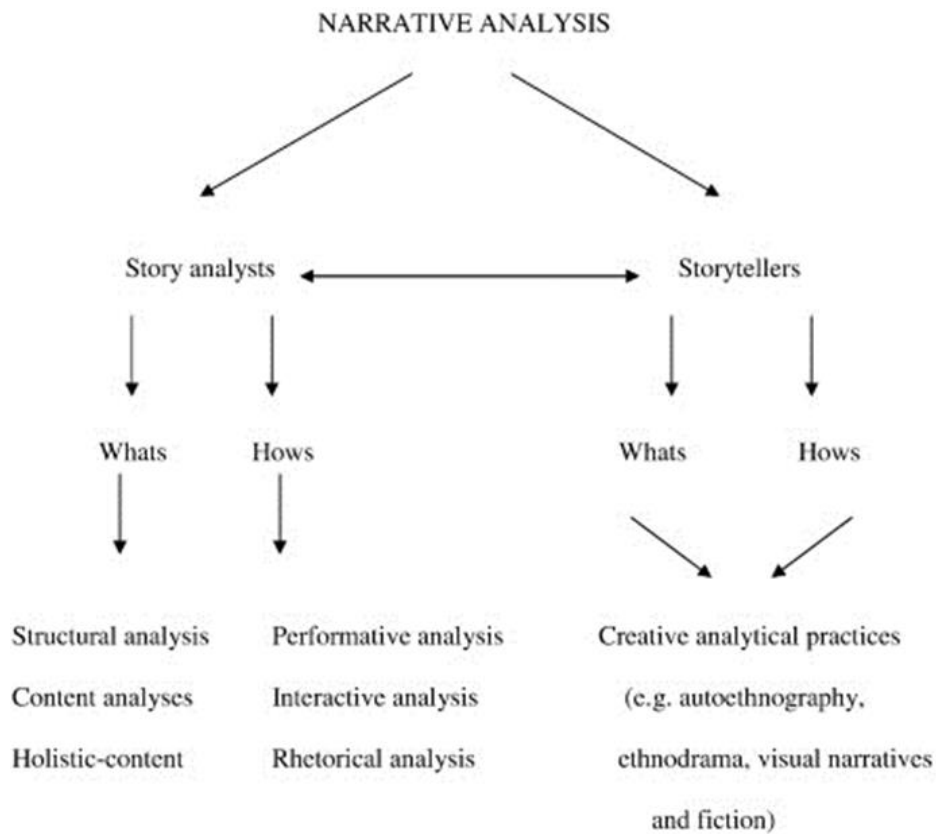


Figure 2: Different ways of narrative analysis (Phoenix *et al.*, 2010 online)

Naomi: Stop! I can see something from this chart that I know. You do not need to elaborate any other models.

Sharin: What do you see?

Naomi: “Creative Analytical Practice” (CAP). In this practice, a researcher enjoys a sense of freedom to analyze the data with a creative impulse including poetic forms, fictocritical presentation, use of pictures, etc. (Phoenix *et al.*, 2010). It is creative and analytical. Therefore, both of us can have our individual space.

Sharin: I am relieved to hear that there is something you know from the chart and you are eager to try it for the thesis.



Naomi: The emergence of the practice “Creative Analytical Practice” (CAP) has a history. There was a dualistic relationship between social scientific writing as fact and literary writing as fiction until the twelfth century (Richardson, 2000 a, b, c). In the years between 1970 and 1980, a transgression began to happen to blur this dualistic relationship, especially in the field of ethnography (Richardson, 2000 a, c). As a result of the practice of transgression, new genres took birth in different forms like creative non-fiction, and ethnographic fiction. Clifford Geertz has seen this genre blending in intellectual writing as philosophical inquiries (Geertz, 1980). So it has a role to play in producing critical insight.

This postmodern call to search for new ways of producing knowledge with multiplicity and reflexivity invoked the value of creative expressions including poetry, conversations, and fictional representations for critical writing (Richardson, 2000a). For example, Myra Bluebond-Langner in the study on children dying of leukemia in has presented the data in the form of a play (Behar, 2007).

Through creative analytical practice, I would like to use performative ways and assume the role of ‘artfully persuasive storyteller’ with an invitation to ‘think with the stories’ (Sparkes and Smith, 2008, p. 306). The storytellers who practise this type of analysis aim to produce an evocative, messy, empathetic and multi-voiced knowledge where meanings stay open (Phoenix et al., 2010). By bringing this evocative note into this autoethnography, we can create an empathic understanding of the subject matter that breaks the boundaries of Eurocentric scholarship and Western discursive controlled narrative, acknowledges emotional complexities to resist reductive thinking and brings a new interpretation that privileges multiplicity (Anderson, 2006, p. 377).

Sharin: Creative Analytical Practice can support arts-based inquiry.

Naomi: Yes! Both arts-based approaches and creative analytic practice (CAP) are deeply related to performative politics of challenging binarism and reductive thinking, especially in terms of cultural representation. I am interested not only in the contents of the story but also in the ways stories are told. My way of becoming aware of the complexities of difference between West and East takes place in a “third space” – a space which is culturally fluid, liminal – where multiple cultures become present and interact (Bhaba, 1994). This in-betweenness of cultures is felt through the forms of storytelling and ascertaining what types of facts are more elaborated in the story (Reese, 2013).

Sharin: Do not start the issue of East and West. Their differences are often too conclusive and extremely problematic.

Naomi: The difference between East and West needs to be taken into account for reading the narrative in the thesis and connecting with the way experiences are revealed, interpreted and written. Although East and West are heterogeneous, there are certain features which make the presence of the “Western” or “Eastern” visible in the narrative of the thesis. I see this difference not as different entities in an oppositional relationship rather as “presence with difference<sup>15</sup>” in relation to each other.

Eastern and Western narratives differ in terms of the nature of philosophical ideas and the particular type and styles for presenting these ideas including linearity, pattern, plot, and style of argument based on epistemology, ontology and hermeneutic. For example, an Indian narrative style follows repetition and dwelling on the details which the Western reader might consider unimportant (Jin, 2006). If you are not aware of this particular style of Indian narrative, you will discard it straight away on the basis of Western thresholds.

---

<sup>15</sup> I have borrowed the term ‘presence with difference’ from Klein’s work ‘Presence with a difference: Buddhists and feminists on subjectivity’ (Klein, 1994). Klein has used the term for exploring the areas of subjectivity in a different context from the way I have used here.

Sharin: Please consider that with the emergence of postmodernism, the Western argumentative discourse has become flexible in accepting different voices and discourses.

Naomi: It is still not easy to accommodate the non-Western way of speaking and seeing without understanding and acknowledging the difference. Without giving a conclusive and static meaning to East and West, I will explain some characteristics of narratives of the intellectual traditions that are found in the geographical East, especially in India, Japan and China based on their intellectual traditions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jain, Taoism and Zen. These narratives differ from the narrative of conventional Western argumentative discourse, particularly those that are embedded in positivist, scientific, humanist and enlightenment approach to narrative, reality, self, and reason. In fact, in the East, the difference between intellectual traditions and literature are blurred. Take for example, the Hindu epics Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavad Geeta. You can just read them as stories or literatures. But they are also a source of Hindu intellectual discourse on self and reality.

Kang (1997) and Minami (1994) found that stories based on culture differ. In a study on Korean and Japanese children, they found the narrative patterns are non-linear with less evaluative structure. In these stories, separate stories are woven into a single story, unlike western linear singular narratives. From a Western perspective, this type of narrative is considered to be incoherent, to lack creativity and linearity (Kang, 1997, p. 4; Minami, 1994). Stories in Bhutanese culture are found to make a deep relationship with different Buddhist concepts like reincarnation and impermanence (Leaming, 2011). In these tales, the characters die and are reborn. There is continuity as well as impermanence which do not fit a Western dualistic understanding of impermanence wherein impermanence is positioned in opposition to the eternal. Japanese children's stories reflect the style of conversation they have with their parents at home and the pattern of poetry; the *Haiku*, a three-line literary form of both poetry and

narrative (Minami, 1994). This poetry might sound incoherent, inconsistent and confusing to readers of classic Western literature.

In Indian narratives, the patterns are not linear; rather they evolve through a circle (Alexandru, 2015). Unlike Western English narrative's pursuance of a steady plot, Indian narrative allows deliberate digression for opening up to performativity and multiplicity (Alexandru, 2015). From a Western perspective, this style lacks coherency and includes unnecessary talk. I liked the way Paniker (2003, p. 8) explains how Indian narrative is different from Western narrative on the principle of organization characteristic:

... the episodes are often like the detachable compartments of a train or tram, and not like an omnibus or airplane. This decentralization in a way contributes to the internal richness of the human experience adumbrated in the long narrative. ... This apparent looseness results from the serial nature of work, which makes it collapsible as and when needed, and provides an openness to the text.

Paniker thinks this characteristic owes much to a very different idea of social cohesion and spatial management and extension that were visible in Indian architecture (temples) and villages. Similarly, in Indian narratives, the reality is depicted in a different way. It is 'not technically realist' in the Western scientific sense (Alexandru, 2015, p. 71). Indian writing and narrative reflect the aged old tradition of Indian thoughts especially the view of Buddhism and Hinduism – understanding reality as *Maya* or illusion, *Lila* or playfulness (Alexandru, 2015, p. 71). Carl Jung has seen this way of depicting reality is in sharp contrast with a conventional Western way of seeing (Jung, 1971, p. 485). But seeing reality in this way does not mean that reality does not exist or does not matter at all. This way of seeing reality conveys deep metaphysical truths through an insight into paradoxical, contingent, playful, uncertain and unpredictable aspects of experience in the zigzags of life.

Margaret Syverson articulates how Zen literature differs from the style of conveying a message in Western discourse regarding presenting narrative with full of ‘unexplained contradictions’ (Syverson, 2011, p. 283). These contradictions in Zen narratives are not given deliberately for muddying the concept, but to break the pattern oriented and disciplinary thinking of mind. Pondering on these ambiguities facilitates a space for flowing non-verbal, non-conceptual innate wisdom of mind that the Zen narrative strives to articulate. The reality in Zen thought is ‘very dynamic’ which does not follow any hard and fast rules to make simple judgemental equation (Syverson, 2011, p. 284). The biggest difference between Zen thought and literature and Western literature, religion and philosophy is that Zen literature offers an experiential oriented wisdom, something which cannot be explained through categorizations, pattern oriented ways, binary models, and logocentric analysis in syllogical framing (Syverson, 2011, p. 284). One needs to taste it turning inward (Syverson, 2011, p. 283). This way of knowing is beyond the category of the anti-logical or logical way of thinking. It is quite different from logocentric ways – the basis upon which Western thought has been structured since Plato (Heine, 1995; Macquillan, 2001, p. 8).

### **Use of images**

By the way, my creative expression is not only based on texts. I have also used images such as personal photographs.

Sharin: What is the use of photograph here except decorating the remembrance? Aren’t narratives enough? We can know the memories from the narrative (Jin, 2006).

Naomi: We should take memory as a representation which is open to struggle and dispute (Radston, 2000). People remember on the basis of cultural resources, and memory becomes historically specific culturally knowledge (Radstone, 2000; Radley & Taylor, 2003).

Remembering through photographs is an interactive act. In this communication, one transfers an organic past. Through the photographs, we can engage with someone's experience in an intimate way, we can imagine what one goes through and what is special in that person's life (Radley & Taylor, 2003). In a photograph, time invokes passion and emotion of that moment which magnifies communication with the reader (Jacobs, 2006). I am not surprised when I read Casey N. Cep's reflective words, 'My photographs are a more useful first draft than my attempted prose was, a richer archive than the pages of my binders' (Cep, 2014, online last paragraph).

Over the last three decades, visual materials are increasingly used within the social sciences, particularly in narrative and biographical research to create more engaging and interactive relations with the memories; to help others understand the experience, and to generate new ideas and to aid new interpretation (Prosser, 2003; Roberts, 2011). Sandra Weber has given many good reasons to use an image in research (Weber, 2008). Let's have look at these reasons – all are relevant to our quest for new knowledge in exploring the relationship between feminism and Tibetan Buddhism:

1. Images can be used to capture the realities, especially the embodied, ambivalent, multiple aspects that words cannot convey.
2. Images are more likely to be memorable than words. We cannot deny how much we rely on and cherish images to interact with the world!
4. Purposeful use of image can embody theoretical insights in a very interactive way
5. Images can provoke spontaneous empathic understanding, very strong and powerful critical sensitivities and responses for social justice.

Think about the picture of the young Vietnamese girl running naked down a street to flee a napalm firebomb during the Vietnam War, or the recent photograph of the dead refugee boy at the seashore. How much emotional response and empathic action arose from these images!

Sharin: I feel very good about my presence. It is for me you have made your argument powerful with references. Now, what else is left in your ideas?

Naomi: I need to tell you why I am planning to use surreal art.

Sharin: Because photographs are not enough to feed your eclectic mind. You need something more!

Naomi: Surreal art is very good at bringing exquisite subtlety and deeper feelings (Schnier, 1953, p.68; Slattery, 2001). I found these arts can complement the photographs in strengthening reflexivity and introspectiveness of this narrative in relating the complexities, vulnerability and empathy of a human journey in relation to family, society, identity, belonging and culture (Custer, 2014).

Sharin: Will there be any interpretation of these images, especially the surreal arts? Surreal arts are highly complex and confusing.

Naomi: If you know the history of surreal pictures, you would certainly give up your determination to find specificity. For your information, surrealism – the school of painting is associated with Magritte and Salvador Dali, among others (Slattery, 2001). The main aim of these arts is to collapse the habit of treating an artwork or any aesthetic work or text as a one-dimensional portrayal of reality (Slattery, 2001). Since the relationship between language and painting is an infinite one, reliance on the word to understand an artwork would be simply inadequate (Foucault, 1983). I did not want to colonize the reader's mind with an argument that claims to be a final explanation of reality (Pelias, 2014). By invoking the non-verbal

symbolic play of a range of images with metaphoric titles, I could express exquisite subtlety and deeper feelings of mind (Rowe, 2009, p. 116; Schnier, 1953, p. 68).

Sharin: Does that mean readers are to be left without any clue?

Naomi: There will be narrative and titles that would accompany the image. Altogether they will invoke dialogue and awareness in interpretation.

Watson questions the Western episteme of privileging text over image through troubling their hierarchical relationship (Watson, 2009). In the autoethnography, I take the courage to trouble and disturb this hierarchy by creating performative space of open-endedness and multiplicity. The texts spontaneously flow with inclusiveness and incompleteness, and the ideas love to challenge the priority of texts over images (Crews, 1999; Linda, 1992; Potgieter, 2003). As a result, the hierarchical relationship between text and images collapses. Their relationship becomes complementary in constructing meaning in the reader's minds (Watson, 2009). This transgression of text-centrism is also related to decolonizing the dominance of Western knowledge within the academic world which relies on texts as a sole means to convey a closed, conclusive and absolute meaning. Narrative, titles and image will celebrate and cherish the dynamic nature of the reader's mind that questions, ponders, imagines and opens the space for multiple possibilities (Nichol, 2009; Langellier, 1999).

Sharin: I will not let this wild experiment flow without restriction. It seems meanings are left at the mercy of multiple interpretations!

Naomi: This silence has meditative aspects which are integrated purposefully in arts, theatre and other creative production (Montoya, 2000). Use of images to complement narrative without much interpretation is considered to be the research method that connects contemplative and transpersonal aspects of human experience as well as invoking a dialogue with the readers (Braud, 1998). By doing so, we can liberate the images from becoming just a mere illustration



and rely on their potential agential capacity to provoke meaning in relation to narrative and titles while interacting with the viewer's gaze (Polanco, 2012).

Sharin: As I said, I cannot let it happen without contestation. So there will always be a struggle and tension to do that.

Naomi: And as a result, there will be no symmetry and linearity. Sometimes there will be interactive ways, and sometimes there will be penetrative ways of meaning making. Well, I like this contestation. It goes well with performative politics! There will be fluidity, fluctuation, and kinesis of dismantling and rebuilding, breaking and remaking for transgression and troubling the boundary (Conquergood, 1995).

### **To summarize**

Sharin: We have to look for balance. Here is a quote in honour of that equilibrium:

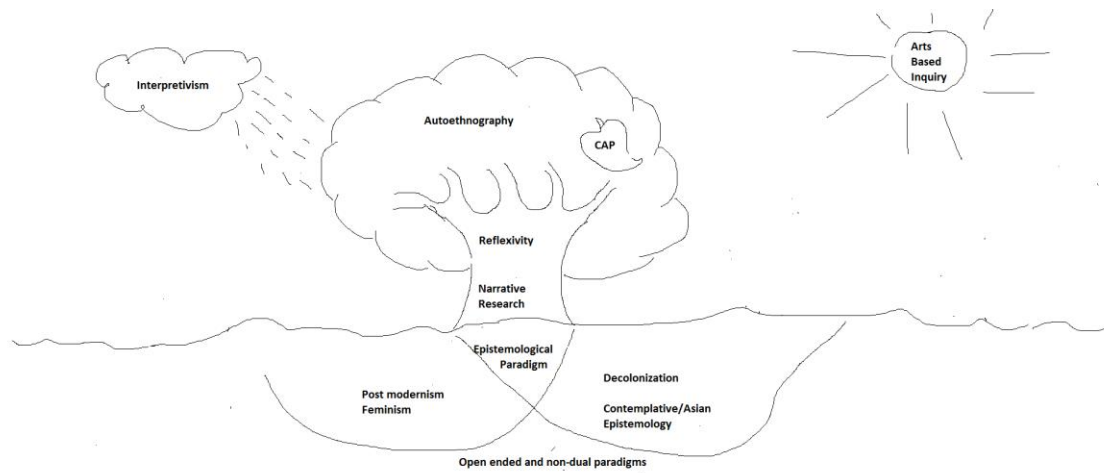
We should not simply pluck a research approach off the shelf, nor should we embrace an "anything goes" attitude. We need to be guided by concepts and theory... What is incumbent upon us as social scientists is to reflect upon what we consider valid research and data. At present, our views tend to be narrow. Our ways of understanding must reflect the multi-layered and complex realities each of us inhabits and that will reveal a beating heart (Faux, 2015, para 33).

Naomi: I cannot believe it! Did you say "heart"? At last, you admitted the role of heart! In this joyous moment, shall I do something "performative, poetic and artistic" to summarize our method chapter?

Sharin: "Summarize"? – That is my task! Can you do it?

Naomi: I do it in my way. Let's have a look:

.



An Imperfect picture of coherency and clarity

**That's how it unfolds**

*An artist's hope*

*floats in the sky*

*Bricoleur wonders*

*how free is 'I'?*

*the academic gaze*

*dies and born*

*In this cycle*

*Knowledge unfolds*

*This page intentionally left blank*

*This page intentionally left blank*

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FEMINISM AND TIBETAN BUDDHISM IN AN IN-BETWEEN SPACE**

In the previous chapter, Naomi and Sharin explored alternative approaches to writing, narrative and developing methods for the research. In this chapter, Naomi and Sharin's conversation radically challenges and disrupts the conventional academic way of theorizing knowledge. Following a fictocritical style and a bricolage approach, Naomi's and Sharin's conversation dwells on the possibilities and potentials of alternative ways of theorization. After the emergence of postmodernism, resistance against normative hegemony has been developed with immense creativity, individuality and heterogonous critical insights. Alternative ways of theorization was a vision of many postmodern and postcolonial scholars like Barbara Christian, bell hooks, Rossi Braidotti, Deleuze and Guattari. Barabara Christian and bell hooks dreamt of theorizing that went beyond White Western male ways (Christian, 1987; hooks, 1994). Inherited from enlightenment and positivist traditions, the White Western male way prioritizes hierarchy, monolithic claims, supremacy, delineation and fixed theoretical boundaries. Perez has visioned a disidentification with this normative gaze which can pave the way for making voices at the margins heard (Pérez, 1999). In this chapter, I have taken the opportunity to challenge the hegemony through a nomadic flow of ideas.

According to Braidotti, nomadism based on bricolage and feminist approaches can act as resistance against Western dogmatic images of thought (Braidotti, 1994; Faber, 2014). Deleuze and Guattari as well as Rosi Braidotti favour a nomadic approach within which multiple ideas can flourish without restrictions, structures and borders (Braidotti, 1994; Deleuze & Guattari, 1993). As resistance against hegemonic and exclusionary views this chapter is an endeavour to explore these theoretical insights in a nomadic way, relinquishing all ideas, desire or nostalgia for fixity and foundation (Braidotti, 1994). This alternative route is intimately aligned with “bricolage”, borrowing strategies and wisdom from a variety of scholarly disciplines and traditions as they are needed in the unfolding context of the research situation (Steinberg, 2006, p. 119).

According to Edward Said, in the realm of Western imperialism there is a continuous process of centering Western discourse and marginalizing the non-Western as “other” (Calichman, 2005; Said, 1979). To challenge this continuity of hegemony of Western styles and frameworks, one needs to be aware of not invoking another dichotomy through oppositional politics. With this awareness, my challenge against this hegemony is based on multiplicity, fluidity, in-betweenness, liminality, and negotiation and navigations between the two zones of East and West.

Since this way of theorization is quite different from a conventional theoretical setting in academic work, this might appear uncomfortable, disruptive, and obscure. Gayatri Spivak prophesized this disruption through a question: “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in the context of the Western dominant system (Spivak, 1988). Alison Jones takes this complex question further illustrating the disappointment of dominant groups at the resistance of subalterns through speaking and at the loss of previous patterns and its authority (Jones, 1999). In human history, either in the political activist field or in knowledge production, there is always a creative tension when subaltern, marginalized or different voices speak within a hegemonic system. There is shock, wonder, confusion and a

break of presumptions and expectation. Jones (1999) considers this disappointment as positive for including non-Western knowledge and worldviews, no matter how alien it is. This positive disappointment paves the way for broader knowledge and a celebration of the diversity of thinking in human consciousness.

Naomi's and Sharin's conversation is purposefully non-linear. This non-linearity is fuelled by a desire which feminist schools after Modernism have pursued; the 'desire to leave behind the linear mode of intellectual thinking, the teleologically ordained style of argumentation that most of us have been trained to respect and emulate' (Braidotti, 1994, p. 29). This disloyalty is difficult to pursue in the current intellectual domain where phallogocentric monologic philosophical thinking tends to rule. Naomi and Sharin's power relation is not only a conversation of selves within the researcher, but a creative critical reflection of power dynamic among discourses and perspectives. Foucault says that the freedom entangled in power relations is always limited and varies according to the possibilities one has to exercise power (Foucault, 1991; Hubert and Rabinow, 1983). The consequence of Naomi's efforts for an alternative theorization is neither absolute nor hopeless. It is full of creative possibilities for thinking in a new way.

At this stage, Naomi's and Sharin's representations as Apollonian and Dionysian traits become fluid and relative, reflecting a dynamic dialogic space and subjectivity. They discuss the question of a feminist subjectivity that can resist power dominance, essential structure and categorization, give meaning to experience, at the same time being spiritual and contemplative in the Buddhist paradigm. This subjectivity is performative in a multivalent in-between space, in the blurred borders between feminist and Buddhist theories, the spiritual and material world, between East and West. This is a space of multiplicity and ambivalence, a space that cannot be completely captured or defined, but can be demonstrated, articulated and interpreted. Instead of a definite,

framed and defined topic, the subject and flow of the conversation between Naomi and Sharin in the in-between space turns into ‘becoming with multiplicity’; an active, dynamic process of thinking and transformation, mutual interdependence, merging and dissolution. According to the perspective of Braidotti as well as Deleuze and Guattari, this becoming and indefinability is the process of decentering, a celebration of multiple centers and a challenge against hegemonic ways of producing knowledge and meaning making in the Western intellectual field (Braidotti, 2006; Deleuze & Guattari, 1993). From an Eastern perspective, this decentering is the centering of an aesthetic void as a creative productive force of dynamism (Abe, 1985; Sullivan, 1973). Whatever you call it with the beauty of dialectic, it is an inclusive politics against the politics of definition, specificity and centering for exclusion and hegemony.

### **Alternative Ways of Theorizing**

Naomi: I think the best way to start this chapter is with the questions that Homi Bhaba’s (1994) thoughts on theories invoked: Do theories belong to some elite people only? Are theories made and remade to sustain hierarchical power relations? Do we use theories to sustain the prisons of the binary way of interpreting the reality and utopian illusion of fixing all the ambivalences, contradictions and confusion to reductive conclusions?

Sharin: You speak up at the moment when I am about to take a theoretical stance. We are obviously in a postmodern and poststructuralist paradigm. We are against essentialism and our main duty is to shatter all that is grounded, structured and possessed of an essence (Humm, 1997).

Naomi: A postmodern approach does not necessarily mean anti-modern or destroying everything that looks Modern (Beasley, 2005; Soja, 1996). Especially, when you cling to the postmodern in



such dualistic, categorized and oppositional ways, you are relying on reductive views that hinder alternative possibilities (Soja, 1996).

I am afraid that by running after a particular theoretical paradigm, you will suffer from “cartesian anxiety”. Cartesian anxiety is an intellectual prejudice that holds if you do not have well demarcated, determined and solid grounds for particular knowledge claims, your project is a hopeless illusory abyss (Bernstein, 1983). Barbara Christian has seen this crisis as the imposition of monolithic perspective to make the world too simplistic by predetermined principles (Christian, 1987).

Sharin: If I am suffering from Cartesian anxiety, you are everywhere with no focus. You are diasporic, nomadic and confused.

Naomi: Everywhere with no focus or rigour! This is a common allegation for the researchers who work with bricolage (Berry, 2006). ‘Every where but no where’ or ‘been there and back to nowhere’, or ‘views from no where’ can be strategic politics, a politics of the paradox and the temporality of perspectives to challenge the fixed borders among knowledge, representation, and identity (Biemann, 2000; Staples, 1992). This type of judgment is very common when you are doing creative research. Brearley (2000) thinks that this judgment is the result of comparison of creative endeavours with established and long revered research paradigms. I agree with his point of view.

We are doing bricolage research. I am sorry. It does not follow a monologic singular path and step by step process. Yes, it goes everywhere because it does not want to reduce the complexities and messiness of life to a clear picture through control and mastery. It borrows from multiple sites to

make us aware of how we are interconnected with everything, and how we are positioned in a web or matrix of social, psychological, cultural and political threads (Berry, 2006; Kincheloe, 2008).

Sharin: Initially I thought you are talking about bricolage only in terms of mythological tools. But now you are extending it to theoretical tools!

Naomi: Yes, it means I will move between multiple theoretical paradigms to create new knowledge that values interconnectivity, interwoven complexity and plurality in understanding reality (Rogers, 2002).

Sharin: It sounds very nomadic. I am confused! When you talk about many things, you lose a certain level of depth which is the key to rigorous research. But I would like to see how you go. You said earlier that bricolage is a “doing” research.

Naomi: Perhaps you are not aware of the politics and potentials of nomadic thought. Nomadic thought can open up a free flow of ideas that a specific theoretical approach might restrain in the excuse of rigour and depth. This free flow of ideas and celebration of the interrelations of theories are always restricted when we craft a theoretical foundation, dwell on it and then want to make it a boundary of our thoughts. We limit our gaze, lenses, and perspectives in the fear of losing ground. Our theoretical home becomes our cognitive prison.

Rosi Braidotti has used the word nomadic as a strategy to deconstruct binary representations (Braidotti, 1994). In this approach, you are always traveling and connecting within temporal spaces. Roy has conceptualized this free movement of ideas as a rhizomatic plant which is always in motion to create connections across different types of plants (Roy, 2003). Deleuze and Guattari and Jean-Luc Nancy see it as free space of thinking, a space where thoughts flow without

obedience to dualistic oppositions, categorizations, frozen structure and fixed boundaries (Deleuze & Guattari, 1993; Nancy, 1994). In this free and fluid movement, we explore temporality, dynamic interaction and interconnection among myriad ideas (Bestrom, 2009).

Nomadic or rhizomatic thought makes us think differently. Instead of using theories as an intellectual feast with abstract and binary ingredients, we can use theory to give multiple meaning to real life experience. According to Barbara Christian (1995), a dynamic alternative theorizing can be happened through narratives, stories, riddles, proverbs and play of language.

Sharin: Barbara Christian is talking about black feminism, and how their theorizing can be different.

Naomi: It is more than that! It has implications to think differently about theories and not to enforce monolithic theoretical prescription.

bell hooks also see the potential of theories in a different way – as a location for healing the scars of social exclusion resulted from binary and reductive thinking (hooks, 1994). We can explore theories to produce an empathic understanding of human life and conditions with critical appreciation. We can theorize through narrative, creative expression and use of alternative world views and reality other than blindly following Western colonial ways.

### **Epistemic Disobedience**

Sharin: I am afraid that you need to undo lots of previous dispositions to work with theories in a creative way. You need to convince me for not taking a single and specific theoretical route!

Naomi: I will! First, I need to know your thoughts about using only some specific theories.

Sharin: Postmodern approaches can challenge the essential approach to reality and self. On the demise of a stable self, the death of the subject and fixed reality, we can celebrate fluidity, heterogeneity, difference and discontinuity (Flax, 1990). In this regard, postmodern and poststructuralist thinking go well with a Buddhist way of viewing the subject on the basis of interdependence and impermanence.

Michel Foucault has seen the subject as conditioned and vulnerable, constructed in dynamic and mobile power relations among multiple actors of institutions and persons (Bové, 1990; Foucault, 1997; McLaren, 1997; Viriasova, 2006). In the historical power game, truth is constituted without any prior objective existence and essence (Bové, 1990; Viriasova, 2006). Ambivalence, ambiguities, complexity and contradictions are aspects of the subject within power relationships. In these constant mobile power relations the subject is in flux through negotiation, resistance, and subversion; and its “freedom” becomes a range of possibilities and options for finding conditional strategies of resisting domination and exercising power in relation (Bové, 1990; Foucault, 1997; Golob, 2015; Viriasova, 2006).

Naomi: As usual, your postmodern approach works in a dualistic way. You tend to create dichotomies like stable versus fluid, fixed versus mobile, constituted versus unconstituted.

Yes, there are similarities between Foucault’s approach to truth and the subject and a Buddhist way of viewing the world. Foucault was influenced by Buddhism especially in challenging the Western logic of essential reality and self (Konik, 2016). But you cannot reduce the Buddhist approach to his approach.

Buddhism sees the world as illusion. Often this view is misunderstood as a meaningless existence. But in Buddhism, it is a way of connecting to temporal reality which does not have any fixed

essence. Buddhist contemplative practice heavily emphasizes realizing the temporal nature of a subject that is constantly in flux. Foucault's view on truth and subject could resonate with a Buddhist seeker's view in these areas.

In Buddhist practice, one turns inward for healing and finds a new way of interpreting the world. Although in different ways, Foucault uses a concept of self care where the subject turns inward, reflects, questions itself and thus changes its relationship to the outer world (Foucault, 1997; Wang, 2004). However, Foucault's self care is only related to power relations, while the Buddhist way of introspection is more than that. You need to take into consideration that you cannot confine Buddhist subjectivity to a postmodern school of thought (Klein, 1995). You need to be open to the possibilities of multiple theoretical domains. Otherwise you keep on making the mistake of reductive thinking. Now I am remembering your suggestion! I think I need to start with your suggestion.

Sharin: My suggestion? I have forgotten. What suggestion was that?

Naomi: When we discussed research method in the chapter titled 'The Art of Seeing', you talked about decolonization. I think I need to start with that to stop you from pushing a monolithic approach. Although you are thinking that you are in a postmodern paradigm and working against Modern Western knowledge, your approach is still based on hegemonic Western ways. You keep on reducing everything into postmodern in the name of fluidity, transience, and interdependence. Postmodern thinking and Buddhist ideas of fluidity, transience and interdependence do share some common tenets. However they are not the same.

Without undoing your previous patterns that are so dualistic, so binary and so reductive, it is risky to talk about something that does not fall within the pattern. This is a form of imperialism working

at the cognitive level to prioritize one form of knowledge and posit that knowledge is in a superior relationship to other forms of knowledges (Battiste, 1998). Often this superior knowledge is a Eurocentric one and the inferior one is the knowledge of non-Western or non-Europeans. Obioma Nnaemaka noticed that Western ways of producing knowledge, even the postmodern ones, cannot accommodate African worldviews (Nnaemaka, 2003). No wonder knowledge from Asia, Africa, and the Global South – all that belongs to subaltern, non-Western become either muted or suppressed, or understood from a Western perspective.

Sharin: It seems you are thinking of intellectual decolonization!

Naomi: Yes, I am! Without epistemic disobedience or disruption of knowledge hegemony, or in other words, without a new epistemic awakening, subalterns cannot speak in dominant Eurocentric discourse (Mignolo, 2009; Sandoval, 2000). Pérez has noticed that one needs to disidentify with the normative gaze for understanding the voices of margin (Pérez, 1999). How will you disidentify with the normative gaze without epistemic disobedience?

For example, a great deal of my experience is spiritual. Some of the characteristics of spiritual experience are: interconnection with the cosmos, a transcendent way of being and a feeling of wholeness (Cascio, 1998; Cowley, 1993). You need a different way of knowing to value these experiences. You need to take into account the transpersonal dimension of human knowing. This knowledge is not transparent and clear in a modern sense. There is ambiguity, uncertainty and unknowing. According to Édouard Glissant it is an opacity that demands freedom from the violence of absolute comprehension, control, and transparency (Glissant, 1997; Lindner & Stetson, 2009). You need to perceive reality as multiplicitous, unfolding that is undefinable. If this reality is summed up in the name of clarity and delineation, its dynamic nature is renounced.

Sharin: I can see your decolonizataion is a resistance!

Naomi: Yes it is a resistance. In this regard, I have borrowed this strategy partially from Sandoval (2000) who sees this resistance as inner praxis for changing outer reality. You know that in terms of signs, there are three primary terms :

- 1) the signifier representing any shape or form for meaning to occupy.
- 2) the signified – representing the concept which fills the shape
- 3) the sign that is produced in the symbiotic relationship between signifier and signified.

The signifier and signified are not neutral objective entities. They can easily relate to the ideological level and produce meaning from that idelological stance (Sandoval, 2000). That ideology can be the superiority of colonial power or the dominance of reductive and dualistic thinking.

Through a decolonial resistance, one can actually stop the unilateral meaning of signs from a Western idelogoical perspective and create multiple meanings through the asymmetrical relation between signifier and signified. In this process, the previous ideological meaning loses its hegemonic power.

Sharin: As you mentioned earlier, can you work on meaning without challenging the epistemology as well?

Naomi: I am getting there. I need to talk about “contemplative epistomology” first.

Sharin: in this thesis we have feminist and postmodern epistemologies which challenge objective and disembodied knowledge. Postmodern feminist epistemologies value-embodied, historical and

situated knowledge, and are more interested in how women give meaning to their experience (Harding, 1987; Seymour, 2013). Postmodern feminist epistemology adheres to particularism, pluralism, relativism, ambivalence and fragmentation (McLennan, 1995). I would suggest that you need not work on contemplative epistemology separately. It can be subsumed within a postmodern paradigm. Postmodern ways acknowledge the complex ways of knowledge creation that can accommodate contemplative knowing (Fook, 2002, p .44).

Naomi: I do not think contemplative knowing should fall within a postmodern paradigm because postmodern paradigms are highly political with an aim of dethroning objective, universal and essentialized way of knowing. Contemplative epistemology is not bound by this political aspect.

Sharin: I remember you have already discussed contemplative epistemology. It is a way of invoking a mind's particular state of awareness, stillness, and serenity to appreciate the multiple and nuanced reality.

Naomi: I am glad you remember. This way of relating to the world is not based on logic, analysis or a subject–object binary. It is a combined method of heart and head (Haynes, 2009; Zajonc, 2005). It is something that human beings uses when good music comes to the ear, beautiful art comes across the eyes, when we are caught by the lines of mesmerizing poetry, gaze at the autumn sky or hear the sound of the waves. We become silent, still, completely attentive and experience a vast space and abundance. It is something beyond logic, language, argument, conceptual thoughts; it is a deep connection with the universe based on empathy, love, and wisdom regarding our interdependency and inner peace. This knowing honours a profound silence and a serene quietude of mind where unspoken grace, beauty, and joy keep on playing without any expectation, judgment, assumptions or anything else. In this knowing wisdom at the very subtle level of the



transience in self and reality unfolds blissfully and the binary relation between subject and object slowly falls away.

Sharin: Just to clarify, this silence is not an oppressed silence and lack of language or intellect.

Naomi: This is the silence that has endless open space, a relief from pain, a joy that is searched for in everything, an answer that we look for and a being where we feel at home. This inner silence is a part of spiritual growth (Hammer et al., 2014; Klein, 1995). When we talked about this before, you were concerned whether contemplation has something to do with critical underpinnings.

In the autoethnography, we will see how contemplative practice like meditation can help to relate to reality on the basis of a certain wisdom, compassion, and openness. Practice of contemplation does not evaporate critical standing. Contemplation can transform our critical gaze from hatred, anger, and dualistic oppositional identity politics towards love, harmony, and interdependence. This transformation can facilitate decolonization, an epistemic disobedience through undoing and unlearning our previous inherited knowledge and perspective.

### **Different Micropolitics**

Naomi: Sandoval (2000) has shown that how the drifting and floating of perspective and meaning can be resistance, as a force of love against binary and essentialized categories. bell hooks talked about love as her political strategy against oppression and domination (hooks, 2000). This politics shows that you do not need to be angry to be critical against oppressive structure.

Sharin: So what is this “love”? To me, love means very naive, passive and submissive feelings in the political field.

Naomi: Love can result in action, responsibility, as well as a desire to have an inclusive egalitarian system that values difference and interconnection (Hooks, 2000; Sandoval, 2000).

Sharin: How does resistance look when it is based on love and interconnection rather than hatred and anger?

Naomi: I am talking about micropolitics of resistance. This is not a unified advocacy, nor a loud protest in the street. It is an individual strategy of disrupting hegemony of power relations where the individual is situated (Mirchandani, 2004; Thomas & Davies, 2005). This individual strategy differs from person to person and the nature of the context. You will see this resistance in writing, use of image and the narratives of this thesis where the multiple sites of oppression of women are explored with introspection on anger and hatred or desire for control. My resistance is based on love, which reveres all inclusiveness and interconnection. At the same time, it challenges the hegemony, control, possessiveness and exclusion in a transformative non-violent way. This challenge is not coming from supremacy and competitiveness; but from a desire to be interconnected. bell hooks named it as “yearning”; a spontaneous intense longing to be connected, valued and included (hooks, 1990).

Sharin: Your micropolitics reflects Foucault’s way of seeing power: relational, in the network and dynamic in nature (Foucault, 1991; Hubert & Rabinow, 1983). To me, your micropolitics is very vague.

Naomi: Because it is very subtle in nature. You are not used to it. We need subtle politics to overcome the inherited pattern of thinking in a binary way. Can you see the ambivalence in resistance? Resistance is often reduced to a dualistic way of understanding: control versus resistance (Kondo, 1990). The question is whether the oppositional relationship between this

domination and resistance is fixed and essential in nature? I found that this dualistic relationship does not let us see the ambiguity and complexity in the relationship between domination and resistance in a particular context (Kondo, 1990).

Sharin: Now you are talking like a postcolonial feminist. Unlike a Western liberal feminist approach, postcolonial projects appreciate the in-betweenness of female subject in resistance; a subject who constantly negotiates with power for her placement, desire, love and belongingness (Gordan & Almutairi, 2013). This subject has the flexibility to surf between the two sides – oppressor and oppressed. In fact, for the postcolonial feminist subject, the oppressor does not work in an essential sense. The family, society and community that want to limit her freedom are also her points of connection and belongingness. She constantly finds new ways of negotiation with these institutions. While Western liberal feminist would judge this way as docile, submissive and weak, a postcolonial feminist approach would value this as a strategy of decentering humanist notions of autonomy and reason (Niyogi De, 2011). From a postcolonial feminist perspective; there is always incompleteness and the ambiguity in this resistance, which the Modern Western eye refuses to see (Selmon, 1997).

Naomi: There is no unified code of woman's resistance under a single label. If there is, there starts another hegemony.

Sharin: To be honest, negotiation reminds me of subjugation.

Naomi: You are in the cognitive prison of Western intellectual knowledge (Battiste, 2000). You see negotiation, compromise and compliance in opposition to "resistance". Negotiation can be very strategic and useful if it is based on accommodation and inclusiveness; as an inevitable part of the process of challenging any hegemony (Dattaray, 2013). I like the way Obioma Nnaemaka (2003)

has seen negotiation and compromise of women: an exchange, give and take with the opposition force and structure, a kind of strategic adaptability for gradual change in the long term. Although her approach is based in the African context, I found many similarities between this approach and my real life experience of waging resistance against multiple sites of oppression, hegemony and exclusion. The same approach I have seen in my mother, grandmother and other women's lives. As accommodative and inclusive in nature, their resistance valued strategic negotiation. This strategic negotiation is goal-oriented, cautious, adaptable, and open to diverse views (Nnaemaka, 2003, p. 382). It challenges patriarchy in different ways. Instead of replacing and shattering everything into pieces, strategic negotiation reconfigures power to accommodative space (Marteu, 2014). In this strategic negotiation, there is an apparent cooperation with structure and rules as a tactic to manipulate the hegemonic order for changing it from within (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2007). A strict definition of "resistance" on the basis of dualistic relationships between resistance/challenge and compromise/negotiation would collapse here.

Sharin: Now you are giving signals of "us versus them"; my resistance is different than yours because I am a third world woman!

Naomi: That is why I do not want to name myself "postcolonial". That was your label. Labels instantly invoke preconditions and presumptions. I have never thought that my resistance is different because I am third world woman. I am just saying, 'look, how different it is!'

Sharin: You are vague.

Naomi: That is a common allegation against the strategy of in-betweenness, drifting and floating which wants to break binaries and dualism in a very subtle way. By the way, this resistance is also textual.

Sharin: That I can see. The open-endedness is proliferating in a very uncomfortable way

Naomi: That is a profound characteristic of textual resistance. It is open-ended and that is why it can invoke non-authoritative meaning to disrupt the monolithic interpretations of reality (Hamam, 2014). This resistance deconstructs binaries, decenters dominant centers, interrupts the dominant gaze and questions master codes, rules and conventions (Hamam, 2014; Kottiswari, 2008). In that sense, personal storytelling can be a resistance by seizing the scope to signify and enter into the struggle for meaning making. Again, it is not a complete replacement of previous conventions. It is a strategic adaptability and pressure, where something is in the process of both inclusion and exclusion.

Sharin: You are stepping into postcolonial and postmodern paradigms. You are a woman from the third world. You cannot erase your colour. Can you? Postcolonial and postmodern strategies go hand in hand; their nexus lies in challenging totalitarian structures (Hamam, 2014). Why not label yourself in that way?

Naomi: Women with colour? Now I have to reply using Kaschak's approach to cultural mapping (Kaschak & Sharratt, 1979; Kaschak, 2011). The way you address me as 'woman from the third world' or 'woman of colour' is based on mapping the boundaries of social and geographical relations using our perspective and ideas. Do you know that this mapping is fluid in reality? What is central can become peripheral, and what is peripheral can become central due to changes of circumstances (Kaschak, 2011). Yes, I am a woman of colour, but where and to whom? Am I woman of colour in my country? No, I am fair woman there. Without an insight into the fluidity, your oppositional politics will start another hierarchy. I have already told you that the postmodern or the postcolonial can also trap oneself.

## **Towards A “Feminist Buddhist Subjectivity”**

Naomi: I think we need to start talking about subjectivity to show the fragility of an essential label.

Sharin: Now you have moved to subjectivity! I am surprised! You are like the “feminine” in a poststructuralist feminist paradigm which cannot be captured (Schutte, 1991). It is always in process.

Naomi: Subjectivity is deeply related to resistance. In order to rebel or challenge the power relations that categorize and classify you, you need to have some although not complete moral and political agency and capability to give meaning to power relations (Mahoney & Yngvesson, 1992; Sawicki, 1996).

Sharin: Obviously we are dealing with postmodern subjectivity. This subjectivity is not unified, static and fixed. It is decentered, fluid and polyvalent; both determined and determining, and historically, politically and socially constructed (Flax, 1993; McLaren, 2002; Milovanovic, 1995). In this context, agency becomes limited and conditional, yet moving and acting within constraints.

Naomi: Do not be so conclusive. The way you have explained subjectivity is problematic. It cannot capture Buddhist aspect of subjectivity. We are in both feminist and Buddhist paradigms. We can't exclude one for the other.

Sharin: I do not agree that postmodern subjectivity cannot capture Buddhist subjectivity. According to Schneiders (2005), a constructive postmodern approach takes account of the possibility of a subject that goes beyond mind-body dualism. It acknowledges a subjectivity where the dualism between object and subject collapses, and the subject becomes holistic in relation to nature and the cosmos. Isn't it all about Buddhist meditation and contemplative practice? Through

a gradual practice of meditation, you make the mind more open and spacious, which gives insight on how body and mind are intertwined and in constant flux (Rejeski, 2008).

Naomi: Let me explain how mind and body are interdependent and intertwined in Tibetan Buddhism. According to Tibetan Buddhism, mind creates *Karma* (actions, thoughts, and speech). *Karmic* imprints remain stored in mind and continue to influence us life after life (Tsering, 2006). Mind has a huge influence on how the body acts and reacts. But from a Buddhist perspective, mind is not reduced to body. The other way round, body can also influence mind's movement. In meditation, we sit still to make the mind calm. If the body is not related to mind, how can the logic of meditation work? Tibetan Buddhism says that our body has many subtle channels through which energy flows (Klein, 1994, 1995). This energy has an intimate relationship with mind's movement. When the body is stilled and we focus on mind, the relationship between body and mind becomes fluid in harmony and unity. In Tibetan Buddhism, this unity has been used to actualize enlightenment. A seeker mediates stilling the body, controls bodily actions, speech and thoughts that are harmful to others, and does prostrations and rituals using body gestures. After death, mind with all the imprints of *Karma* continues to influence the present life. But it cannot remember the past lives (in a general sense<sup>16</sup>). It cannot remember what type of body it had in past lives!

Sharin: Interesting! It is like a programme is working within us, but we are not aware of it. Surprisingly, we ourselves had a role in the creation of this programme

Naomi: Yes! Now how can you separate body and mind? Is it separate? Is it the same? There is no conclusive answer to these questions. Mind and body are distinguishable, but not separate. They

---

<sup>16</sup> In some exceptional cases, some people have remembered some parts of their past lives.

are neither the same nor other (Lin, 2013). That is how the non-duality of mind and body is understood in Buddhism.

Sharin: Feminists, especially the postmodern and poststructuralist schools are also very fond of the non-duality of body mind. Although they do not understand the relationship between body and mind in the Buddhist way, they see body and mind as being inverted into each other (Grosz, 1994). Referring to the non-binary relationship of body and mind, Grosz (1994) uses the metaphor of the “Möbius Strip” to symbolize dynamic movement, fluidity and the interconnection of two poles which is neither one nor two, rather their relationship always floats in-between.

Naomi: Let me remind you that Buddhist subjectivity is not only about non-duality of mind and body! There is also fluidity and interdependence. Buddhism accepts multiple selves, fluidity and floating (Safran, 2003). There is no essence or fixed self. All the phenomena including the self are constructed through the myriad play of cause and conditions. This absence of fixed and essential self is termed as “no-self” in Buddhism (Kalmanson, 2012).

Sharin: In feminist politics, you need a firm ground to claim the subjectivity against all oppressive structure and exclusionary practice. Is the Buddhist concept of “no-self” useful in this context?

Naomi: Let me clarify that changeability, interdependency, fluidity and multiplicity are crucial for understanding the absence of an essential self (Gross, 2009; Kalmanson, 2012). Now let’s think about some questions: when does a woman become the Other? An extension of this question would be: When you become a woman of colour who is the “Other”? You need someone or some entity that relates to you in that way, right? Either there are patriarchal structures and society, or colonial powers that categorize you in that way. That means that there is a condition under which you assume that this identity is the only way to define your subjectivity. The way colonial power and



patriarchy categorize you and you resist – is that all about you? When you understand that you have multiple selves and one of them is in oppositional politics, you do not reduce your subjectivity to that category only. You go beyond and your subjectivity expands. When you realize the changeability and fluidity of the self, you are open to the new situation. Everything is changing in every moment; as does the nature of oppression and your resistance against it. If you are not open to change, you are not strategic in your resistance. Change and fluidity make your subjectivity dynamic and politically strategic. Kalmanson (2012) has noted an appreciation of fluidity in bell hooks's (1995) approach which asserts that the complex and multiple subjectivity of black folks can give more promises for liberatory politics.

You need to be apt in using “no-self” as a site of dynamic fluidity and multiplicity in relation to resistance against dominance and hegemony. Any notion of subjectivity is incomplete and partial (Klein, 1995). A politics based on fluid subjectivity is more dynamic, open to change, and capable in performing progressive politics.

Sharin: In that case, you need to link it with a feminist approach.

Buddhist subjectivity seems quite akin to postmodern and poststructuralist feminist subjectivity. But a Buddhist approach is not focused on woman's subjectivity in particular, especially in relation to oppression and exclusion. Rita Gross (2010) has noticed that Buddhism deconstructs everything including gender and focuses on the interdependence of everything. Nevertheless she has not found a Buddhist teacher who used these techniques to deconstruct gender to challenge gender inequality in particular. In order to make Buddhist subjectivity useful for feminist purposes, you need to link it with a feminist subjectivity that is aware of patriarchal oppression and exclusion of woman in particular (Dalmiya, 2001; Klein, 1995).

Naomi: Although Buddhism can help in dealing with other problems of life, it is not the solution to all the problems in your life and the world. As you know, Buddhism's prime importance is mind and its nature at a broad level, not at the level of gender, class or race which to a large extent are social constructs (Dalmiya, 2001; Klein, 1995) .

Sharin: I want you to think about postmodern and poststructuralist feminist subjectivities. According to postmodern and poststructuralist feminist approaches, subjectivity is multiple, layered, not fixed, unstable and decentered (Giroux, 1991). One of the ways to reach "no-self" in Buddhist practice is a constant reflection upon how our subjectivity is constituted, and thus finding no essence in an unitary self. This constituted aspect of subjectivity is at the core of postmodern and poststructuralist feminist ways of challenging the essential unitary self (Hekman, 1991).

Naomi: Just to remind you that not all postmodern feminists would go for a completely constituted subject. A constituted subject possesses the risks of overdetermination and weakens feminist politics. That is why some postmodern feminists like De Laureates and Linda Alcoff believe in a postmodern subjectivity that retains some sort of capacity or agential power to challenge discursive formation (Alcoff, 1988; De Laureates, 1984). According to them, subject can act as both constituting and constituted and thus can exercise agency to some extent to rearticulate the subjectivity.

Sharin: According to Hekman (1991), this approach is based on the dialectic between constituting and constituted subjectivity which cannot address poststructuralist feminist's particular aim for breaking the binary of categories between 'constituted and constituting self'. To avoid this dichotomy, Hekman (1991) proposes French feminist's approach. French feminists like Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous have made us see the inconclusive undecidable and

unfinalized aspect of subjectivity (Cixous, 1990; Cixous, 1996; Kristeva, 1984; Kristeva, 1998; Irigaray, 1985). According to them, woman's subjectivity is beyond capture, grasp and codification, and can only be demonstrated and interpreted in a partial way (Schutte, 1991). Kristeva talks about the subject in process, a fluid subjectivity that is constantly in motion challenging the dichotomy of constituting and constituted (Kristeva, 1984, 1998). In Kristeva's subject, we find the unconscious aspects that work in relation to the conscious aspect. The unconscious part of the subject is in a fluid relationship with the categories of constituting and constituted. The question of their fixed differences becomes frozen. As a result, the Modern notion of a subject which has full control over life and choices, and is consciously aware of what it is doing is in trouble. Kristeva's subject is decentered and continuously becoming, which challenges the very notion of the Cartesian conscious subject, pure reason and autonomy (Kristeva, 1980; Schippers, 2011).

Irigaray gives another dimension to poststructuralist feminist subjectivity by challenging the dichotomy between subject and object (Schutte, 1991). In the phallic masculine order, the subject has superiority over object; object is something to be known and interpreted by the subject. This conventional rule is related to the way women have been objectified throughout centuries. Irigaray disrupts this conventional relationship. In this disruption, we can see that object and subject have some capacity to convert each other. In a non-dichotomous relationship between subject and object, a feminist subjectivity is reinvented, thus breaking the dominance of the masculine subject.

Therefore, we find the poststructuralist feminist subject is grounded in fluidity, interdependence, impossibility, undecidability and non-dichotomous relationship with the object. Here everything is constituted through relations and conditions. In this world view, Irigaray's subject finds herself in non-binary relations to subject-object, masculine-feminine and man-woman. Buddhist

contemplative practice has cherished similar ideas of non-duality between subject and object, and non-binary and non-essentialist approach to categories.

Naomi: I agree. In contemplative practice, the fixed boundary between subject and object becomes open. As a result, the subject finds itself interrelated with the world (Klein, 1995; Zajonc, 2005). This interrelation radically challenges an essential superior sense of subject over object. Non-binary and non-essential approaches to subject-object, man-woman and feminine-masculine can be a profound antidote to patriarchal ways of controlling the world based on essentialism, oppositionality and hierarchy.

Morrison (2009) has observed that both Kristeva and Irigaray were influenced by Eastern thoughts on fluidity, transience, interdependence and the void. In Irigaray and Kristeva's thinking there is an acknowledgement of void, an inevitable part of the constitution of the subject through interdependence, relations, fluidity and movement (Morrison, 2009). This void is the force that creates the dynamism of the subject through changeability and motion. From a Buddhist perspective all phenomena are conditional, relative and interdependent having the nature of void. In that sense, French feminist approaches reflect the Buddhist approach in challenging the modern, essential, separate and autonomous notion of the subject and the Cartesian mind-body duality. Both Buddhism and postmodern and poststructuralist feminism hold the worldview where everything is in relation to existence and agency. In these worldviews, autonomy becomes relational, fluid and relative in degrees. Both feminism (poststructuralist and postmodern) and Buddhism are in agreement on this point.

Sharin: Excellent! Now I want to talk about linguistic aspects of poststructuralist feminist approaches. We have already talked about it in an earlier chapter. I would like to recall and extend this discussion further in terms of explaining the subjectivity. You will like this topic.

According to Luce Irigaray, speaking is never neutral. It has a social character, shaped by ‘discursive and social and cultural practice’ (Litosseliti, 2006, p. 1). As a result, it cannot be separated from power dynamics and the play of hierarchy in terms exclusion and inclusion, superiority and inferiority, high and low (Crawford, 1995). While challenging the masculine subject that rests on finalized and conclusive paradigms, French poststructuralist went deeper into structure and systems; they brought to our attention that it was through language that the subject is formed (Schippers, 2011). French poststructuralist paid attention to signifying processes in terms of the symbolic and the semiotic. In the symbolic order, relationships between signifier and signified is fixed, linear, binary and literal. While in the semiotic order, the relationship between signifier and signified becomes fluid, poetic and multiple. The meaning within the semiotic order is open and pregnant with multiple interpretations. In a discourse, where the masculine subject dominates through language, the symbolic order remains hegemonic, and the semiotic remains suppressed. In this discourse, woman cannot speak in her own way, and her subjectivity imitates the masculine, the direction of phallus. Woman can refuse to speak with the language that mutilates her body and emotions, and resists the hegemonic system of bifurcation and binary. If women need to claim their subjectivity to honour their emotions and embodiment, they need to bring out the semiotic, the domain of “feminine” where women’s body, emotions, and worldview can speak. Through invention of a feminine language, woman can resort to her embodiment in the text to reclaim the subjectivity. Helene Cixous terms this language *Ecriture Feminine* where meaning becomes fluid, non binary, multiplied and heterogeneous, reflecting women’s complex

embodiment and emotions (Jones, 1981; Pontuale, 1996). Helene Cixous noted that in comparison with masculine sexuality, women's individual constitutions are enriched in terms of heterogeneity, receptivity, and multiplicity (Cixous, 1990). This dynamic libido of women is reflected in the feminine language where the semiotic transgresses the symbolic order through rapture, gesture and articulation. It should be noted that this approach is not about replacement of the symbolic by the semiotic; rather it is an expression of liberating the repressed semiotic and weakening the dominance of symbolic.

I know that due to *Ecriture Feminine* you are very inspired to write escalating ambiguity to the highest level. I want to inform you that even French feminists did not dream of completely replacing the symbolic order. They have challenged the hegemony of symbolic order and created the possibilities for oscillations between the semiotic and symbolic (Schippers, 2011).

Naomi: I do not think your tendency to fixed ways of meaning making will let much oscillation take place! On this note I want to say something that I have discussed before.

Sharin: Please do not disrupt and distract. We are talking about the feminine.

Naomi: Yes, it is related to the feminine. Most of the feminist literature that talks about the feminine has limitations, an indifference towards the masculine. They hardly talk about the masculine. If we look at the tantric paradigm, especially in Tibetan Buddhism which propagates the feminine and the masculine to balance a person's inner being, the feminine is always relational in nature. "Feminine" and "masculine" in the *Tantric* realm are neither essential in nature, nor a fixed projection of gender. It denotes a polarity to understand the nature of internal and outer phenomena. Interestingly, this polarity is part of our subjectivity and women and men represent the polarity through embodiment. The feminine style (in a man or a woman) in the *Tantric*

paradigm refers to energy, movement, connection, light, love, grace, touch, the senses, merging into life, pleasure, surrender, spiral ways of thinking, nurturance, mystery, communion, intuition, creativity, love and feelings (Deida, 2006; Solluna 2016). From a *Tantric* perspective, a masculine style denotes silence, meditation, aloneness, asceticism, courage and adventure, discipline, direction, focus, possession, detachment and rationality (Deida, 2006; Solluna, 2016). These polarities have playful aspects of communion and conflicts that can enrich our spiritual experience (Deida, 2006). The *Tantric* point of view considers that these polarities are neither separate nor the same. These polarities also have the aspect of wholeness where they remain merged and undifferentiated, going beyond lines demarcation and categorization. From this aspect, they appear as “one”.

Sharin: I am amazed to see that *Tantric* perspective to feminine and poststructuralist feminist approach to “feminine” are quite similar, especially in relation to valuing receptivity, feelings, intuition and spiral ways of thinking etc. It seems there is some sort of universality in this phenomenon. However, I am apprehensive about the way you use the term “polarity”. If feminine is only a polarity, why is it so important in relation to gender?

Naomi: This polarity is not something to be negated or undervalued. For some women, it can be part of their subjectivity which remains suppressed due to society’s cult of masculine traits and figures. If we do not value the feminine, we undermine receptivity, surrender, interdependence and feelings in our life. If there is indifference to the feminine, the dominance of the masculine creates imbalance in life. Ecofeminists have noticed that indifference to the feminine has been one of the causes of the destruction of earth (Diamond, 2004; Pasi, 2016; Phillips, 2014). The deep cause of environmental destruction lies in the hierarchical relation between men and nature. In the absence

of feminine wisdom, masculine traits have ruled our individual and collective consciousness and convinced us that we need to destroy the earth to make our lives happy.

Sharin: Stay grounded in the postmodern and poststructuralist feminist area. Please do not bring in ecofeminist issues. It is another area. That is your problem – you go everywhere.

Naomi: I was just giving hints as to how important the feminine is in both personal and collective life. Suppression of the feminine simply makes us overlook part of our being and hinders our creative connection to life. That is why we need to understand the feminine as a strategic category without essence and emphasize its role in resisting the hegemony of the masculine.

Sharin: Please remember that you should not replace one with another in meaning and texts – the masculine by the feminine. Try to have a balance. We have discussed this earlier. Now let's go back to what we were discussing. Do you have any question about agency in a poststructuralist feminist approach? The way poststructuralist French feminists talk about subjectivity gives rise to questions about political agency of women. According to Hekman (1991), the individual subject can reverse, modify and embrace or resist the discourses within this approach to subjectivity. Hekman refers to Butler, who thinks agency can take place within the construction in which the subject is embedded (Butler, 1990). Although the subject is constrained, the subject can be creative by reversing, integrating, and resisting the very discourse within which it finds itself. Hekman (1991) gives the example of language to understand this process. When someone learns language, they have to operate within particular vocabulary and grammar. At the same time, he/she has to be innovative and skilled in playing with words. That is how the subject can acquire agency in the postmodern world.



Naomi: On this point, I need to bring back your fascination with Foucault. His view has been subject to the same critique. Mahoney and Yngvesson (1992) think the notion of a subject who is only produced through power relations is not enough for a feminist emancipatory politics. You need to have a subject who can give meaning to power relations and is capable of using some form of moral and political agency.

Sharin: Foucault's subject does not exercise agency in the Kantian sense where pure rationality controls the reality (McLaren, 2002). Subjects can be both active and passive, both independent and enslaved at the same time (Wang, 2004). They can exercise power resistance to different degrees, whilst being shaped and influenced by disciplinary forces (McLaren, 2002; Sawicki, 1996). Subjects can be influenced by disciplinary power, yet have the ability for critical reflection (McLaren, 2002; Sawicki, 1996). Foucault's approach makes us see the complexity of the subject embedded in ambivalent power relation (McLaren, 2002). This power is polyvalent, constraining and productive. Embedded within these power relations, freedom becomes conditional. It performs as a discontinuous becoming through turning the power relation into open, dynamic and creative options for alternative modes of thought and existence (Taylor, 2011). The subject in this power relation is both enabled and constituted, both dominated and capable of waging resistance. If you take into consideration the way the subject has been viewed, you will see that there are always the possibilities of conversion of self. Self can critically reflect, challenge the previous mode of thoughts, analyse the way truth is given, and transform and transgress to different degrees (Foucault, 1990, 1991; Wang, 2004).

Naomi: I agree that Foucault's view is amazing. His argument makes us rethink the subject and the idea of freedom from the perspective of contingency, conditions and relations. I told you before that his view resonates with a Buddhist view of finding no essence in self and reality. Foucault's

view that there is no pre-given or pre-existent essential self complements the Buddhist way of challenging the essential self. Interestingly, Buddhism also has the idea of conditional and contingent freedom, although Buddhist approaches to freedom is very different from postmodern ideas. “Freedom” in a Buddhist paradigm is used in two ways: it is contingent and conditional in terms of human life, and it is unconditional and infinite in terms of transpersonal subjectivity. As a subject to individual and collective *Karma*, the human in Buddhism is bound by its own created cause and conditions in a world where everything arises interdependently and conditionally. In that sense, human freedom is conditional and contingent. Buddhism also understands freedom in the sense of freedom from suffering that arises due to desire (The Dalai Lama, 2008; Surya Das, 1998). One can get this inner freedom through attaining enlightenment, through the cessation of all desires.

Sharin: I know that spiritual enlightenment is a gradual process. If a person is practising meditation and other Buddhist practices to attain enlightenment, they do not become enlightened at once. Until enlightenment or complete liberation takes place, a seeker experiences partial liberation<sup>17</sup> in terms of inner freedom (Wright, 2016).

Naomi: In one sense, yes. But the problem is that Foucault would not agree with the Buddhist notion of inner freedom. According to the Tibetan Buddhist approach, enlightenment is something that is innate within us (Klein, 1995). We need to discover it by spiritual practice rather than inventing and constructing it. In an intellectual academic paradigm, a pre-given ideal freedom would be tantamount to a Western enlightenment approach to freedom. Foucault would never agree to pre-given phenomena that are waiting to be discovered (Foucault, 1997). In Buddhism,

---

<sup>17</sup> The idea of partial liberation is taken from the online lectures by Robert Wright for the course ‘Buddhism and Modern Psychology’ offered by Princeton University.

this is not used in the sense of a Western enlightenment approach to freedom. There is a transpersonal aspect of this freedom on which Western Enlightenment approaches do not focus. In this sense, Foucault's approach and the Tibetan Buddhist approaches are not completely compatible.

Sharin: But in terms of the constructed aspect of subjectivity, the postmodern and the poststructuralist approaches and the Buddhist approach look quite similar.

Naomi: Crowder (2016, p. 26) thinks:

Both postmodern feminism and Buddhist philosophy have common ideas about the constructed nature and fluidity of the self. Feminist and Buddhist ontologies can inform each other, the former on the nature of gendered subjectivity under oppression, the latter on how to reconstruct and relate differently to the self by cultivating self-compassion and not identifying with our constructed reality (our stories) as who we are.

Sharin: What? 'Not identifying with the stories?' What is the point of listening to the story of an individual who claims that 'this is not my story, although I have experienced it!' Isn't it crazy?

Naomi: I knew you would react like this. Many Buddhist concepts make you feel uncomfortable because of your dualistic ways of thinking and your Western imperialist inheritance. When I said 'not to identify with the stories', you immediately thought it to be an abandonment or disconnection! But it is not!

Buddhism talks about non-attachment which is often misunderstood as indifference or abandonment. Buddhist non-attachment is more about connectedness valuing impermanence, compassion and well-being of the world and people to whom we are connected (Klein, 1995; Wallace, 2001 a, b). We accept the impermanence in the way we connect to the world, at the same

time, we cherish empathy and awareness of interdependence which take place in a temporal, ever changing space. This connectedness does not prioritize possessiveness, dominance and supremacy. Rather it follows love, interdependence and wholeness. In terms of the stories, it is about becoming aware of a creative distance between our subjectivity and the stories we tell ourselves. It is a distance which is a breathing space for us, a space to retell our stories in a new way for our emotional growth and dynamic connection with the world. In this regard, Anne Klein's approach has drawn my attention (Klein, 1994, 1995). Her approach is both feminist and Buddhist.

Sharin: I can't believe that you are following a particular approach!

Naomi: You always see me in an essential way! I do change, I am fluid, without essence and therefore, I am dynamic.

Klein (1995) has noticed that there are two aspects of Buddhist subjectivity: from one aspect it is close to postmodern feminist ways and from another, it is beyond this. Buddhist practice provides the insight into how the self arises through dependent causes and conditions. In terms of absence of an independent essential self, Buddhism and postmodern feminism look similar. But this absence is also a point where Buddhism and postmodern feminism begin their separate journeys. Postmodern feminism comes back to the absence again and again with a focus on constructed aspects of self. Buddhism goes further with this absence.

Sharin: For me, this absence reminds me of hopelessness and meaninglessness.

Naomi: Buddhism does not understand emptiness as incomplete (Klein, 1995). It is not an absence in opposition to presence. In Buddhism, emptiness is revered as experiential wisdom that gives deep insights into reality. Stephen Batchelor (2000, p. 21) called it "sublime depth" which reveals

‘mystery and contingency beneath the surface of anything that seems to exist in self sufficient isolation’.

Insight into “emptiness” is a transcendent experience with a special awareness of transience. This particular state provides the warm presence of unity, harmony, satisfaction and peace within (Shultz, 1975). It is an openness, wholeness and fullness; a freedom from fixed conceptual fabrications, and an awareness of the absence of essence that makes reality and self dynamic and creative; changing, fluid, and shifting (Gyatso, 2003; McCagney, 1997). Experiences of “emptiness” can open up our hidden gift and creative potential. Hsieh’s (2010) life journey shows that emptiness became a source of creation in her quest for finding a ‘unique tone’ in art (p. 134). When Hsieh was able to empty her mind from all previous conceptions and fabrications through meditation, she found the uniqueness in art. In her case “emptiness” was the beginning of a new perspective. According to the view of transpersonal psychology, experiences of “emptiness” can be therapeutic; since it transforms the mind towards openness, spaciousness and internalization of an awareness that reality is constantly in flux (Vaughan, 2010). Mind spontaneously learns how to let go of fixed concepts and judgments.

Insight into “emptiness” inevitably invites experiences of the dissolution of fixed concepts of self. What remains after the illusion of a single separate self dissolves? It sounds astonishing, but Buddhist meditation practice gives a practitioner an experience of non-conceptual, wholeness, centeredness, radiance, blissful and joyful aspect of mind. According to Klein (1995), this state cannot be reduced to only contents of construction. However, it is spacious enough to hold multiplicity, fragments and chaos. Tibetan Buddhism considers this state as our primordial nature which remains covered by delusions and other mental afflictions. We have the choice and agency to remove it by our effort and develop insight within. The eighth-century Indian Buddhist monk,

Shantideva, whose works on compassion is studied as one of the major sources of Tibetan Buddhist approach to compassion, experienced a sublime emptiness – “no-self” – in his retreat. What was the outcome of experiencing “no-self” or emptiness? Did he withdraw himself from the world? Batchelor (2000, p. 33) tells us, ‘by doing so he did not experience his being vanishing into nothingness, but he rediscovered his being as a cell that formed part of interdependent multicellular organism of existence’. The realization of no-self based on the interconnection and empathy of the suffering aspect of conditioned existence gave him an altruistic intention towards all sentient beings.

You see that there is an acceptance of multiplicity and chaos in Buddhist subjectivity. At the same time, there is a grounding, calmness, serenity, profound silence, clarity, awareness, focus and centeredness amidst the conflicts, contradictions and chaos. The latter is the non-constructed aspect, or in the spiritual vocabulary it is beyond construction. A mind trained with mindful meditation practice can focus simultaneously on constructed and non-constructed aspects of mind (Farb et al., 2007; Klein, 1995).

Now I would like to talk non-duality in more detail. It is an important dimension of Buddhist subjectivity.

Sharin: Sorry to intervene, but we have already talked about non-duality while we were discussing poststructuralist and postmodern feminist ways of seeing the relationship between subject and object as fluid and non-oppositional.

Naomi: The dissolution of the subject and object’s fixed dichotomy is only one of the aspects of non-dual wisdom. Klein (1995) explains three types of non-dualism: cognitive nondualism, evolutionary nondualism and ontological nondualism. Nicholson (2008) explores similar

nondualism in terms of subjectivity, although she has not categorized the aspects like Klein. But these categorizations should not be taken as fixed and separate as they mainly serve to clarify highly complex non-Western knowledge.

Cognitive nondualism is what about you are talking about; the non-duality of subject and object. In cognitive nondualism, the subject emerges from the interplay of various causes and conditions including gender, race, class, as well as from open, fluid, relative and conditional relationship between subject and object. Buddhism terms this “dependent arising”. Object and subject are not in a hierarchical relationship, they can influence each other and converge into each other.

Ontological nondualism is about the play of emptiness and form. Ordinary phenomena that appear so solid and essential to us are never separated from their empty nature. According to the Tibetan Buddhist view, at the conventional level forms appear through the interactions of cause and conditions and dissolve in the great absence “emptiness”. It is the great absence which makes the forms dynamic and everchanging. Emptiness and form are not hierarchical and contradictory in relation.

Since primordial purity or enlightened nature is present in all beings, the difference between ordinary and enlightened persons is not in a closed boundary. Evolutionary nondualism is about the open boundary between the enlightened and unenlightened state. The enlightened aspect is accessible to ordinary beings through insight and practice, and the ordinary state is accessible to the enlightened being for the purpose of guidance.

Sharin: How do all these non-dual approaches related to the feminist project?

Naomi: Duality is deeply related to the discrimination towards women as the Other (Byrne, 2004; Nicholson, 2008). Women have been seen as object and powerless because of a particular duality where the subject gains supremacy and control over the object. In many religious settings, women have been seen as dirty and diluted because of the dualism of the sacred and profane (Gross, 1993 a). Religious impositions and marginalization have been enforced on the basis of separation between the divine and the ordinary world. If women resort to duality to challenge patriarchy, they are likely to create another hegemony and dichotomy. A non-dual world view is non-hierarchical and participatory, wherein everything is in a relationship that is mutually reciprocative and valued. Non-dual approaches can allow women to claim their space, meaning and relations in a non-hierarchical way.

In light of this non-dual approach, you will see the non-duality of the outer and inner world, East and West, and materialistic and spiritual world in the thesis, especially in the performative use of the images in the autoethnography.

Sharin: So there will be non-duality of materialistic and spiritual world in the thesis!

Naomi: Yes. In a spiritual seeker's life, the spiritual world is not a metaphysical abstract world separate from the materialistic world. A seeker has to live this earthly life in contemplation of the divine (Shultz, 1975). Spirituality flourishes when a seeker can see the sacred in this world, in everything, in everyone, in every relation between human to human and human to nature and the universe. In a spiritual journey, the sacred and profane become non-oppositional and non-binary. Based on non-dual wisdom, the grounding, awareness and centeredness from Buddhist contemplative practice can be the antidote to the reductive approach to subjectivity for women.

Sharin: Do you mean reduction to the essential and independent subject?



Naomi: Reduction happens in seeing the subject not only as essential, but also as becoming limited to linguistic and social construction, especially within gender, race, class and ethnicity (Klein, 1994, ~~Klein~~, 1995).

Sharin: This means the postmodern, poststructuralist and postcolonial approaches might run the risk as well! After listening to your explanation, I think Buddhist subjectivity is very multidimensional and spacious. As I said earlier, Buddhist approaches need to be combined with feminist approaches for making it more suitable to feminist women. Therefore, I need to clarify some concerns. My first concern is regarding agency in Buddhist subjectivity. Buddhism believes that who we are is due to our *Karmic* dispositions of previous lives. How do human beings have agency in a worldview where everything is predetermined by his/her unknown actions in the past?

Naomi: I think this is a very limited concept of *Karma*. *Karma* is a very broad concept interwoven in past, present and future. We have inherited some patterns in life due to our past *Karma*, but we also have options to change our future through present actions. For example, one is born as disabled or as an adult with a certain height and weight. One cannot change the conditions of disability, but one can change the perspective towards this inescapable reality. One cannot change the height, but one can change the weight. So we have something within the range of our capacity and something we just simply cannot determine.

Buddhist practice (including meditation) is all about freeing our mind from these past patterns, to be in the present and aware of our actions, thought and speech, and change the future on the basis of present actions. The third and fourth noble truths<sup>18</sup> clearly indicate that there is a way out of

---

<sup>18</sup> The Four Noble Truths have been explained in chapter 2.

suffering and Buddha's teaching is all about the way to use agency to take one's being beyond suffering (Hyland, 2013).

Mindfulness practice plays a crucial role in Buddhist practice, particularly in developing a different agency. The knowledge that Buddhist contemplative practice, especially meditation, gives is different from the knowledge we derive from study and intellectual analysis (Nyanaponika, 1972). Through mindfulness practice we learn to go deep into our consciousness; we liberate ourselves from past habitual patterns, perspectives, views and embrace our joy, fear, and sadness. Gradually we develop the ability to keep our distance from the emotions and contents of mind and become aware of the ebb and flow of different emotions arising contingently due to myriad causes and conditions (Neff, 2003; Wilber, 2000). This internal observation brings a profound introspection (Gunaratana, 2002). When we can witness ourselves and distance ourselves from the contents of our mind, we can experience spacious openness with multiple possibilities. De Quincey (2008) notes that awareness of multiple possibilities through meditation can provide more choices to create the new moment of experience. Repetti (2010) sees this aspect as a skill, as a capacity to be aware and not to become constrained or completely determined by negative thoughts, feelings and actions. Therefore, meditation practice can reshape the agential capacity to change one's interaction with the outer world. One can prefer to act or not to act based on more clarity and positive emotions.

This agential capacity allows us not to be carried away by transient phenomena and connect with others with love and compassion. That is how we combine the key principles of Tibetan Buddhist practice:<sup>19</sup> renunciation, compassion, and wisdom on emptiness. Through the wisdom of

---

<sup>19</sup> These three principles have been outlined in the chapter 2.

emptiness, we internalize how self and reality are without essence, yet meaningful. Through experiencing the state of renunciation, we become aware of the transient nature of body, contents of mind, and reality. We stop running after the illusion of permanence. Through compassion we connect with this reality using positive emotions.

Sharin: Renunciation? It sounds very painful and sadistic.

Naomi: It could be. There is both joy and sadness. There is sadness at the contingency to which we are bound interdependently. At the same time, it could also be joyful, a joy of learning that whatever we are experiencing, good or bad, is transient (Dzongsar, 2003).

Sharin: It seems Buddhist renunciation is different from the conventional sadistic understanding of renunciation. I like the way you explained mindfulness in relation to agency. I am highly pleased to see a coherency in your expression. It is becoming more authentic. However, I want more clarifications. Buddhist subjectivity talks about a kind of self sacrificing compassion and “egolessness<sup>20</sup>”. I find this is very problematic for women in a patriarchal society. It can be a tool to bind women to gender stereotyped expectations.

Naomi: This is why we need to interpret the religious concepts through feminist insights. Interpretation makes a lot of difference. Klein (1995) is a feminist, so she was very successful in knitting Buddhist subjectivity with feminist insight. Listen to Klein’s dream of *Dakini*. You remember what is *Dakini*, right?

Sharin: Yes, it is part of the feminine project in this thesis. *Dakini* is a female embodiment of enlightened wisdom. In Tibetan Buddhism, the boundary between sacred and profane, and human

---

<sup>20</sup> Usually Buddhism uses the word “egolessness” instead of “lack of ego”.

and deity is open. One of the examples of this fluid boundary is *Dakini*. She is a deity, representative of enlightened wisdom and she is often associated with outstanding women practitioners, teachers and consorts of great masters (Jacoby, 2015; Klein, 1995; Simmer-Brown, 2002; Willis, 1987a).

Naomi: Klein (1995) went to meet a female Tibetan Buddhist master, who is revered as *Dakini*.

Sharin: Can you be more precise? I have no time for story in this chapter.

Naomi: Come on, we are theorizing in different ways. Do not expect me to be conventional. After meeting the female master with three other American women, Klein had a dream. In that dream she saw that she herself along with two other women received empowerment from three different wisdom *Dakinis*. Here empowerment refers a particular form of spiritual blessing. The dream had a special meaning to her: ‘The dream seems to indicate the possibility of American women being centered in themselves as well as crucially engaged with others’ (Klein, 1995, p. 20). Although Klein has provided the meaning in the context of American women, I can see something deeper.

Sharin: You always see something deeper even when is not! She has clearly stated it is for American women only.

Naomi: I see that her interpretation has huge potentiality for all women seekers on the Buddhist path who are trying to integrate the teachings of compassion and egolessness with their feminist values in day to day life. How to be centered around oneself and connect with others is just like a *Zen Koan*, a playful paradox that radically challenges our habitual pattern of finding conclusive solutions through polarization, dichotomies and category (Byrne, 2004). It is a *Koan* for every woman, since every woman has a unique story, challenge and wisdom to address life questions.

Sharin: 'It is a *Koan*, no answer' - is that all? I find your approach is an escape.

Naomi: The wisdom of *Koan* can also be a part of representational politics (Byrne, 2004). Pondering on *Koans* we open ourselves to unpredictable possibilities, undecidability and inconclusiveness. This can be a representation politics against the authority of definition and categorization.

You have talked about poststructuralist feminism. Did they define "women" and "feminine" conclusively? We can only know how meaning is given to it. But if we reduce this meaning to a definition, we limit ourselves with its label. Static definition invites duality, self-other, object-subject dichotomy and essence, which are the capital for patriarchy.

Sharin: I want some clarifications. I cannot let you leave saying it is a *Koan*.

Naomi: Compassion can be an antidote to our hatred and anger against patriarchy and other forms of oppression. Feminist Buddhist scholars like Klein (1995), Gross (2009), Judith Simmer-Brown (2002) and Janice D Willis (2011) have found compassion, patience, and other Buddhist values to be empowering and useful for self care. These practices and values gave them a different perspective from which to view the world with both critical insight and empathic understanding. Esha Niyogi De (2011) has shown how Bengali women in postcolonial India and contemporary time have used compassion as wisdom to find their place, belonging, hope and dream within the patriarchal society. They challenged patriarchal society, at the same time found a strategic way to negotiate and bargain with its oppressive structure for the relation and space they loved. Their strategy was personalized and unique depending on the context.

Through mindfulness practice, we learn to explore our consciousness and know our shadows as well as gifts (Hanh, 1999). We heal and accept ourselves, the self which is always in a process of change. We become open, curious, accepting and transformed (Siegel, 2007). When we know ourselves, we also understand others. We internalize that the way we are conditioned and yearn to be loved and valued applies to everyone. We can forgive, forget and let go. To me, it is a way of learning the art of loving through loving oneself. We understand, empathize, accept and challenge at both inner and outer levels. I think Buddhist compassion is more about loving oneself in a way so that we can love others. In this continuous learning process, there is always a possibility for invention, innovation, and creativity for every woman.

Sharin: Now I find some hints in that *Koan*. Next, I want more clarifications about “egolessness”, a widely used term in Buddhism implying absence of ego.

Naomi: “Egolessness” sounds very scary due to Western psychology’s different way of understanding it (Epstein, 1988). Egolessness is not selflessness or abandoning your individuality and voice (Gross, 1993 a). Buddhism does not consider it as lack or loss. Perhaps that is why instead of using lack of ‘ego’, Buddhism uses the word “egolessness”. In Buddhism, egolessness is about an awareness of how ego works in our mind for supremacy, narcissistic attention, mastery, essence, control and dominance over reality and others (Epstein, 1988; Klein, 1995). Isn’t this awareness good for understanding and challenging patriarchal control both within and outside? Patriarchy is all about control and dominance. If we have that tendency within, we will perpetuate those practices. To me egolessness is all about valuing the nature of a participatory non-hierarchical universe where we all share a part of the web. No one is superior or inferior. Everyone is at the same time a teacher and a student. This insight makes me humble and pacifist and at the same time gives me a special confidence and strength.

Sharin: It is quite paradoxical that Buddhist teaching is about non-hierarchy, while Buddhist institutions including Tibetan schools are based on hierarchy, male dominance and superiority of different levels of priests.

Naomi: Unfortunately yes! But do not reduce Buddhist institution to dominance, or hierarchy, and patriarchy. You see, Tibetan Buddhist institutions have preserved age-old wisdom and practice for centuries. One of the reasons is its organizational character. Have you seen how states and universities have an ambivalent character as the institution (Weiler, 2005)? Buddhist institutions also have this ambivalence.

Sharin: Well, we should not accept the ambivalence unconditionally. Our subjectivity should encompass the critical resistance against all kinds of patriarchy everywhere, even in the institutions and teachings which we love.

Let's go back to Buddhist subjectivity. It is neither poststructuralist and postmodern nor essentialist. It has concepts like "primordial purity" and "emptiness". But these concepts are not used in the sense of "essence" in Western Modernism.

Naomi: I would say, emptiness should be understood as going beyond the dichotomy of essence versus fluidity. Concepts like primordial purity or emptiness are the higher transcendent experience beyond conception, entity, and any materialistic and conceptual phenomena. In Eastern thinking – the intellectual traditions of Hinduism, Taoism and Buddhism – emptiness has been associated with tranquility, serenity, simplicity, womb of all creations, as well as fullness, infinite, and unboundedness aspects of life and self (Yu Sun, 2004). So it is not only about fluidity and finitude, but also about infinity and continuity. Here is the paradox! How to categorize it under the intellectual tradition of the West? According to Klein (1995), emptiness can be related to both

postmodern fluidity and essence in the Modern sense. Emptiness has a dynamic flow of fluidity, at the same time it is unconditional and present everywhere. In that sense, emptiness can be seen as ‘essential essence’ (Klein, 1995, p. 167).

Sharin: It seems to me like another *Koan*!

Naomi: It is! Emptiness is neither nihilistic nor essential (Abe, 1985). It is neither completely fluid and fragmented, nor fixed and stable. It contains aspects of fluidity and fragmentation as well as serene stillness and continuity. Here stillness and fluidity are not in a dualistic oppositional relationship. If you categorize emptiness as either postmodern or modern or both, you actually reduce its unique and different appeal to Western intellectual traditions. Why do you not leave it open?

### **Unfolding The In-between Space**

Sharin: After our discussion, I found that the boundaries between Tibetan Buddhism and feminism have become increasing fluid in an in-between space.

Naomi: Yes. This in-between space is always offering an unfolding of perspectives, a third possibility beyond ‘either-or’ (Soja, 2000, p. 20). It is a space where enclosed exclusivity of opposing sides loses its fixity, and polarities can inhabit each other (Hollinshead, 1989; Pallí, 2006, p. 12).

I hope you will not see it as a despair. In-betweenness can be politically performative to resist fixed borders (Biemann, 2000). Borders are highly ambivalent, they mark their territory as well as exclude.



Sharin: I think I need to clarify that borders are not only about the demarcation of physical territory but also about the lines of mental, ideological and theoretical areas.

Naomi: Thanks to Gloria Anzaldúa, who thought about the border in a broader way and made us notice the immense potential of in-betweenness in creating new consciousness and insight into reality (Anzaldúa, 1987). In-betweenness is seen as a cross over, a space of liminality, transition and contestation where meanings are constantly negotiated. In-betweenness is also a space where we liberate ourselves from binary concepts and transcend duality (Perez, 2005). In-betweenness conflates difference, and troubles specificity, homogeneity, binary and exclusive exteriority. It is a vague and undetermined space where contradictory positions and mobility emerge, interact and dwell (Licona, 2012). In this space, we include, accept and accommodate divergent thinking and “others”. In this thesis, in-betweenness is more than the convergence of feminist and Buddhist areas. The in-betweenness is also about the blurredness between the spiritual and the material world, the sacred and the profane, as well as well fluidity and dynamic interaction between East and West.

Sharin: You have already talked about the blurredness of the spiritual and material world when we were discussing non-duality in this chapter. I can guess what you are referring to as in-between space in terms of East and West. Homi Bhaba called it the “third space” where cultures, identity and belongingness loose their complete exteriority and pure authenticity, and share each other’s aspects in an ambivalent and ambiguous way (Bhaba, 1994).

Naomi: You are right indeed. But this is a very general definition of third space. My third space is personalized. It is without any essence and foundation, nomadic; historically moving, constantly in motion and weaving together multiple cultures and ideas. It is a strategy for giving meaning to your cultural belonging, root, and representation in a way that challenges specificity and

rootedness. You become aware of a continuous process of interaction, enmeshment and blending. In this continuous unfolding, you cease to find root and authenticity.

Sharin: That would be interesting. In most of cases, the third space is understood as the consequence of meeting between two different cultural spaces. In Bhaba's (1985, 1994) intellectual context, the question of third space arises when Britain took over India and two cultures met; or Indian or Third World migrant generations find themselves in the West. There is a pre-condition of exteriority of two different spaces which merge and become "third space".

Naomi: I think I need to talk about space in general to clarify the concept of "third space" a bit more because space can be physical, mental and social (Lefebvre, 1991; Schreiner, 2016). The physical space is the one that we comprehend materially and geographically including geographical territory, architecture etc. Mental space is the way we perceive space through meaning making in the mind. We use signs and symbols to make meaning of a perceived space in different ways using metaphors and symbols like bigger, smaller, open, close, free etc. Social space is constructed by complex social relations where both mental and physical space can converge. For example, online media, public gathering and so on. In our experience, the fixed differences among these spaces can often be blurred and paradoxical. Our mental and social spaces are associated with physical space and vice versa. The relationships among these spaces might not be very linear and clear. Gaston Bachelard (1994) has shown how physical and mental space can be entangled in a fluid relationship due to our heterogeneous ways of giving meaning to space during our interaction with materiality. It flows like poetics with the rules of semiotics where the relation between signifier and signified is constantly moving and shifting in an arbitrary way. Homi Bhaba's third space is also a blended space of physical, mental and social. In terms of Bhaba's

third space, colonial history plays a crucial role in the convergence and dissolution of two different spaces.

Naomi: We will also use the notion of space for this thesis in a blended way. In my third space, the merging is always there, yet unfolding in new ways with new interaction in the context of history, imagination, memory, mobility, travel and displacement. It is a process where colonial history forms one of the parts. Colonial history is one of the threads woven together with other threads. There is no essence, only a becoming from the continuity of weaving and interweaving, interactions and “intractions” of multiple cultures, paradigms and thoughts.

Sharin: Now you are using a word “intraaction”. What is it?

Naomi: This is the word coined by Karen Barad (2012). In an interaction, it is assumed that there is exteriority, independence, and individuality between multiple interacting phenomena. While “intraaction” implies that there is no pre-given independence and exteriority. They all come into existence in agential relations. I am using the term “intraaction” in the sense that intraaction implies a deeper relation than an interaction; a deeper relation that is not based on absolute exteriority and individual independence.

For example, I am from Bangladesh. I was born and brought up with Bengali culture and Islam. If I go to the Middle East or Australia and encounter their cultures, I am in a third space. That is a usual way to activate third space on the basis of a meeting between first and second space. But there is another way to see their inseparability. There are many cultural symbols and values of the Middle East, especially Islam, that were ingrained in the historical process of constructing Bangladeshi culture. If I am in the Middle East, I am interacting with a new space. At the same time, I knew this space in a different way. The meeting of different spaces is not based on absolute

individuality, rather on inseparability. It is the same in the case of Australia or another Western space. I was born and brought up in Bangladesh with Western thoughts and ideas. When I am in Australia, I am interacting with Western thinking. But the same thoughts and ideas are already within me to different degrees. Not only is there inseparability, but there are also series of multiplicities. Suppose I am interacting with Buddhism, Chinese culture, and other Indian ideas and thoughts in Australia. These thoughts and ideas have traveled from India and China to the West and become accustomed to the new space. When I meet these traditions, there is a multiplicity of connections.

Sharin: You are deconstructing through decentering. I think the possibility of a plurality of interaction and in-traction emerge in a certain context when multiple physical spaces interact in a present moment along with mental and social spaces that have historical and past entanglements. Your third space is based on interdependence and fluidity of cultures. Here two spaces are inseparable, yet distinguishable. It is a space of becoming in the sense that it unfolds; it is un-finalized, open-ended and pregnant with multiple possibilities (Williams, 2013).

Naomi: There is a center. It is the “void”. Unlike Western philosophical ideas, in Eastern intellectual traditions, especially in Buddhism in general, the void does not represent loss, negativity or lack. Rather, void has been seen as a productive force from which all creations spring forth (Abe, 1985; Sullivan, 1973). It is considered to be the center. This is a center in the continuous flow of weaving and interweaving that I am talking about. It is the emptiness, the great void where the continuous play of weaving is taking place. It is a presence of great absence that makes the phenomenal, material and conceptual weaving so dynamic and multiplicitous with plural perspectives. Everything arises from emptiness, weaving, merging and dissolving in emptiness.

Sharin: Now you have turned into a different direction. You have come back to Buddhism. You were thinking about the in-between space between East and West, and now you are talking about their contradictions!

Naomi: Isn't third space about accommodating contradictions, conflict, chaos, and tension among polarities (Bhaba, 1984; Licona, 2012)? If you refuse to see this tension in the name of absolute harmonious coexistence, you deny the organic aspect of third space.

Sharin: After listening to your ideas, I think your third space is not critical enough. You have to emphasize colonial history in constructing the third space, the in-betweenness of East and West. Just have a look at what we have discussed so far. This representation easily falls within a postcolonial paradigm of resisting Western binary categories, and refuses to accept the imperial Western tendency of over-fantasizing or inferiorizing non-Western Buddhist ideas. Your third space cannot overlook that colonial aspect of the relationship between East and West.

Naomi: In an in-between space or third space, there is always an acceptance of contradictions, tension, struggle and resistance. The third space is not an abstract idea; it is embodied in history, gender, race and other human conditions. In that sense, I am not overlooking the power dynamic between East and West. What I am trying to do is to make the relation between East and West more dynamic.

Sharin: Thanks. I am now interested to know about your ideas on use of space in narrative and image. I know you cannot do any creative thing in a simple way. There has to be some climax.

Naomi: You are right! You know that we are planning to include performative use of pictures. What do you normally see in a picture? There is a subject as well as space. Space and subjectivity

are deeply related. This relationship takes place not only in visual images, but also in real life. Subjectivity and space can co-create and co-construct each other (Briginshaw, 2009). We have already discussed the way in which social, physical and mental spaces can be blended and blurred! Their relations and production of the relationships can ironically be paradoxical with a plethora of diverse way of perceptions. The same physical space can appear differently to different people based on their mental perception of space. When you have insight into the blended and blurred aspects of spaces, you will notice the performative aspect of subjectivity in response to the space that it inhabits. This performative aspect offers a presence in motion, an organic, live aspect, an experience of how subjectivity is lived through the chain of events in life.

Space is both embodied and disembodied. In human history, real and imaginary metaphors are used to invoke a particular meaning of space (Ryan, 2014). I plan to use a range of metaphors through the images, the titles of the images and narrative for invoking a performative meaning of a multivalent in-between space.

Narrative is always associated with spatial imagination (Ryan, 2014). We will have a “travel” metaphor in the narrative of biography to invoke a particular human imagination in relation to a journey or voyage. According to Mikkonen (2007), travel narrative provides a different spatial imagination that goes beyond the mundane corporeality of the sensory world and brings multiple readings to the same story. Travel metaphors offer openness, constant motion, change, wonder, and transformation in the subject’s relation to space. When someone says “journey” or “travel”, we instantly have an imagination of leaving, traveling and coming back to our home. However, the meaning of concepts like “home” and “travel” can be ambiguous and multiple with immense human creativity.

I have some other plans as well. Linde and Labov (1975) view the paranormal representation of space in terms of the strategy of map and tour. Spatial imagination in this thesis becomes dynamic with these strategies. According to these strategies, a map represents the space as the panoramic view of an observer situated on an elevated point. I have applied this strategy in writing the narrative and using the pictures. The autoethnography is written as “she”, not as “I”, or “Naomi” or “Sharin”. “She” becomes a symbol of a detached view of the experience. This observer’s view regarding one’s personal life is reminiscent of Buddhist wisdom. In this wisdom, the subject does not identify itself with the phenomena that it is experiencing (Klein, 1995). In the language of transpersonal psychology, it is a witnessing awareness of not identifying with the discursive nature of mind (Gunnlaugson and Moze, 2012).

Sharin: I want to clarify something. Didn’t you heavily criticize the objective stance earlier? Your explanation of “detachment” and “witnessing” remind me of objectivity!

Naomi: Thanks for your questions. It gives me further options for the clarification of my ideas. These two “objectivities” are different. Objectivity has been criticized in feminist research and postmodernism due to its controlling and mastery motivation in relation to others. Witnessing awareness is about invoking a particular aspect of mind not determined by emotions, thoughts and concepts. It is a way to go deeper within, a way to explore one self with a sense of serene stillness (Vaughn, 1985).

Sharin: Fair enough! I think I can talk more about it after seeing the biography. But you mentioned “strategies” in the plural sense. What is the other strategy?

Naomi: The “tour strategy”! In the tour strategy, space is represented from within, the way you are experiencing it. ‘Tour’ symbolizes the constructed aspect of subjectivity in this thesis. The

narrative and images embody this strategy as well. By blending “map” and “tour” strategies, I want to express the performative aspect of Buddhist feminist subjectivity. This subjectivity, as we have discussed before, does not completely identify with the contents of experience. It has connection with the contents, at the same time it is transcendent in going beyond the contents. It has both constructed and non-constructed aspect. How do these plural aspects look like in real life? The narrative and images of autoethnography tell us that by the use of space in a poetic way where semiotics is valued on equal terms with the symbolic meaning.

Sharin: It is complicated! It is so complicated that I do not want to argue. I just have a question, ‘is this package politically useful for this thesis?’

Naomi: Both Buddhism and postmodern, poststructuralist and postcolonial feminists challenge modern, patriarchal and unitary Cartesian subjectivity. This subjectivity is grounded in unitary, essential, linear, dualistic and fixed features and delineations. Feminism tells us that these features have been used hegemonically to oppress women’s subjectivity in discourse and reality. Buddhism pointed out when these features become hegemonic, they hinder our insights into reality. We need to be creative and dynamic in challenging these features. Because the modern Cartesian subjectivity is something we have cultivated for a long time, its embeddedness is deep within us. If we need to challenge it radically, we have to be highly creative, dynamic and performative. In Tibetan Buddhism there is a practice known as *Chod* that means to cut off or to slay the ego (Chaoul, 2009; Rinpoche, 2007). It denotes a radical transformative challenge to previous perspectives, patterns and structures that oppress our openness and potentials for change. My creative package is like *Chod*, a transformative experience of losing previous patterns of hegemonic order.



Sharin: I hope that's all for this chapter.

Naomi: Not yet, something is left! It is the "gaze". Let's talk about this.

### **The Feminine Gaze**

Sharin: How is gaze relevant here?

Naomi: As we are using many pictures in the ethnography and write in a very interactive way we cannot be silent about the "gaze". Other's desires play a role in our subjectivity. The way we are looked at and judged has a huge influence on our subjectivity in terms of interdependence. The role of the gaze was brought to light by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1978), in explaining a state of awareness when one is viewed. The gaze is not devoid of power relations and ideas about knowledge (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001).

Sharin: Please make our point precisely, since we already have many ideas interacting and weaving in a very fluid way! Do not make it too chaotic!

Naomi: Laura Mulvey talks about the male gaze where the subject watches the object with a phallogentric view (Mulvey, 1975). It is about invoking the gaze of an active heterosexual male's desire in relation to his passive object of desire. In the male gaze, subject and object remain separate and hierarchical. E. Ann Kaplan (1995) has extended the question of gaze further in terms of the centrality of the imperial white male gaze. You can look at the image or read a narrative from the centrality of the White Western male subject's threshold. When the narrative or image fails to meet the threshold, or purposefully refuses to fall within the threshold, you judge the knowledge as inferior in quality.

Sharin: What is the alternative? Do you want to do things the other way round?

Naomi: You always think in a dualistic way. There is an alternative to the White Western male gaze: the feminine. The nature of the feminine gaze is matrixial, polyvalent, semiotic, nuanced, relational and fluid (Ettinger, 2006). In a feminine gaze, there is a receptivity and co-construction of meaning making from the both the seer and the seen, the knower and the known. The feminine gaze values the participatory play between subject and object in making meaning, especially in terms of undecidability, multiplicity and inconclusiveness (Schilo & Sabadini, 2011). Here subject and object influence each other, and drift from their static positions to invoke non-duality. Our images and narrative presented in the next chapter are performed to honour this feminine spectatorship. Since the phallic signifier's hegemony lies in binaries, ordering, selecting, separating and unifying the feminine gaze challenges the phallic signifier in creative ways (Cameron, 2009).

Sharin: Why can you not do things simply? There are too many ideas, and my head is spinning! I hope it will not turn out to be a recipe with too many ingredients!

Naomi; Correction! It is a "bricolage" which aims at multiple perspectives, weaving and interweaving of multiple ideas for spacious, wide and open thinking. In our next chapters, all these ideas will unfold for producing knowledge in an alternative way.

Sharin: I hope for the best! Let's move on to the next chapter.

*This page intentionally left blank*

## CHAPTER 6

### STORIES WITHIN THE STORY

Epistemic disobedience and decolonization of knowledge as I have used these concepts in this thesis include the use of feminine archetypes and their stories as well as the hero/heroine's journey. This chapter dwells in these ideas in relation to biographical writing. The chapter is divided into two parts: the first part 'Myths, Archetypes, and Metaphors' explores the nature of archetypes and the patterns of the hero/heroine's journey that frames the autoethnography, and the second part 'The Story of an Ordinary Woman' is the autoethnography itself.

The feminine archetypes and the patterns of the hero/heroine's journey will unfold through a performative politics of texts and images in the autoethnography. In invoking multiple aspects of reality, I use the stories of three different female archetypes from various parts of the world and different historical times. As I have previously discussed, the autoethnography is written in a fictocritical style where the self is positioned as "she" to illustrate a dynamic and therapeutic subjectivity. The narrative is written in a fusion of Eastern and Western styles where the images and their titles play a crucial role in expression and representation. To have a dialogue through 'performative exchange between viewer and viewed', one needs to 'stop looking at the photograph and instead start watching it' in relation to the narrative and titles (Levin, 2009, p. 330).

The bricolage approach has played an influential role in shaping the textual politics of this thesis; the bricolage unfolds as it progresses with wonder, disappointment and surprise. One cannot judge

the unpredictable turns of new ideas in this; this is a politics of alternative ways of producing knowledge and a resistance to conventional ways as I invoke a continuous perspective that requires a travelling gaze on the part of the readers (Stephens, 2013; Sun, 2014). This path goes in many directions and values interdependence and voidness in all phenomena. As such it is very different from the Western classical gaze that fixes on a single direction with a penetrating approach to capture the object with mastery and clarity (Stephens, 2013; Sun, 2014). This different gaze is encouraged in Chinese calligraphy and painting, and Japanese arts as well as Australian Aboriginal dot painting. After the emergence of postmodernism, many Western arts invoke this gaze as well. If we consider the thesis as an art form, the invocation makes the eye roam all over the narrative. The gaze never rests. It experiences nuanced shifts from passage to passage ‘like walking through the vegetal pattern of one ecosystem turning into another. This is not just an aesthetic response. It is a response to a different ethics, a different way of seeing the world, conveyed by a different pictorial language’ (Schilo & Sabadini, 2010, p. 6). If someone is in a cognitive imperialistic prison, this invocation would radically challenge the previous presumption of producing knowledge in a particular way. This invocation unsettles the hegemony of white Western male knowledge paradigms that excludes other possibilities to interpret reality (Ferguson, 2015).

Interestingly, the alternatives to White Western male knowledge speak along the same lines regardless of their geographical locations. If one considers Chinese and Japanese perspectives towards art, there is a continuous, travelling, unfolding and nuanced gaze in invoking a non-binary relationship between the subject and object where mastery and control lose its supremacy (Stephens, 2013; Sun, 2014). If one looks at a feminist paradigm, a similar approach becomes evident. Joanna Zylińska’s concept of the feminine sublime used in feminist art and writing is a profound example of this type of feminist resistance. In the “feminine sublime”, the subject and

object meet in a different way; there is no control and supremacy on the part of the subject, rather there is reciprocity, bewilderment and wonder (Schilo & Sabadini, 2011; Zylinska, 2001). Subject and object diffuse into each other blurring the borders of a multitude of categories. Their delineation becomes a mystic question. In this approach mastery, linearity, supremacy and control as well as categorical duality become highly unstable. Altogether, the next parts of this thesis are the “doing” aspects of the thesis; the practical application of the vision of an alternative way of producing knowledge that the previous chapters have discussed.

## **6:1. Myths, Archetypes, Metaphors and Our Story**

‘The best things cannot be talked about. The second best things are usually misunderstood’.

(Heinrich Zimmer, quoted in Rohr, 1994, p. 54)

Naomi: Spiritual experience often happens in silence! Perhaps that is why mystics write poetry and use symbols and metaphors to express the interior aspects of spiritual life (Shaw, 1995).

Sharin: Do you mean these are mystical experiences which transcend the normal mode of consciousness? For your information, you can borrow definite and specific characteristics to define this type of experience (Torchinov, 2003). Such as a unifying vision, feelings of oneness, a sense of very deep detachment from the mundane world, feelings of bliss or joy, feelings of the divine and so on (Shelbourne, 1988).

Naomi: These experiences are largely nonconceptual. Any definition would be inherently limited in its capacity to describe the phenomena. What I am trying to say is that the life endowed with mystical experiences, and embedded in a journey to find the divine is something like the second best thing in life which are ‘usually misunderstood’ (Rohr, 1994, p. 54). Images, archetypes, metaphors, symbols, stories and myths are very effective expressions of these experiences.

Sharin: I cannot believe that you want to use frameworks to understand your life, because you always wanted to go beyond the frames, beyond the structures, and beyond the label.

Naomi: I talk a lot about complexity and chaos, but I do not aim to replace patterns and linearity. If patterns, order and linearity are to be replaced by messiness and chaos that would again perpetuate the cycle of dualism and binaries in relation to academic knowledge. In this narrative, I have worked in a space where chaos, messiness, and non-linearity of life are in an ambivalent relationship with the human innate desire to search for patterns and order. In the biographical narrative of this thesis, life's uncertain and messy trajectory is flowing within a cycle. The patterns arising from the nuanced moments of life are complicated and multiple (Kundert-Gibbs, 1999). The use of myths and experiences give multiple meaning, interpretation and perspective to these patterns. In a space of ambivalent and ambiguous relationships among chaos, order and messiness, subjectivity is constructed to challenge the binary and dualistic opposite relationship between the subtle categories such as randomness/messiness versus order, pattern/symmetry versus non-symmetrical and eclecticism, essence versus relative, unilateral versus multilateral and so on. In doing so, the meanings of experience become multiple and resist falling into the trap of extremes; either in extreme relativism of being valued as nothing or in a singular truth overloaded with static and fixed meaning.

Sharin: That sounds reasonable. Now I think, you need to talk a little about myth. The Greek word for myth refers to word, speech and story, and great scholars like Aristotle used myth as a plot of the drama. The widely used phrase "it is a myth" itself connotes an oppositional relationship to truth and reality or something that is half truth (Deen, 2006; Morford and Lenardon, 2007).



Naomi: There are also other perspectives about myths. Myths are born out of a necessity of the human psyche, and are crucial in knowing aspects of the human mind (Lauter, 1984). Whereas empirical language has objective facts, myths refer to quintessential human experiences, the meaning and significance of human life (May, 1991, p. 26). Myth is used as a form of expression in a similar way as art; as a manifestation of thoughts and feelings, human's awareness and response to the universe, way of being and a particular way of seeing life (May, 1991; Lauter, 1984). Although we do not tend to acknowledge this, the mythic universe is in our unconscious. It manifests sporadically in our wants, desire, preference, use of symbols, and metaphors in writing as an attempt to connect with the greater universe through our little, yet significant role (Rohr, 1994).

There is some type of deeper truth about life behind every mythological story (Campbell, 1998). Many of the stories of human love echo the themes of the heroic legends of Abelard and Heloise (lovers who were separated by others), or Eros and Psyche (the big misstep in love), or Medea and Jason (the interplay of jealousy, envy, and revenge of insanely possessive love) (Estes, 2004). These themes cherish the quintessence of human experience in a universal sense (Campbell, 1998; Estes, 2004; Houston, 1997). Their appeal to the human world transcends time.

Sharin: In that sense, the mythic tales are similar to the personal truth of a memoir (Murdock, 2004b). The personal truth is an integral part of our research. I am gradually becoming convinced.

Naomi: Glad to know!

On this occasion, I cannot resist sharing some relevant personal experiences. When I began my AusAid scholarship programme in Australia along with more than thirty international students

from around the world, we had a cultural transition workshop. The cultural facilitator used Joseph Campbell's journey as a model to make us think about our journey in Australia.

Campbell's model is widely used for education, training and facilitation processes (Hogans, 2000; Tuffley, 2014). In that model, the hero or heroine leaves home, and begins the journey following a calling, endures different challenges on the path, finds mentors and guides and learns lessons through the challenging phases, and at last becomes successful in finding the treasures. With that treasure, the hero/heroine again returns home. As newcomers to Australia, we could easily relate to that model and became confident that we could encounter new challenges and gain some wisdom from those challenges.

Sharin: This indicates that the use of myth or tales serves not only a spiritual purpose, but also other purposes such as education. However, I suspect that viewing one's life from the perspective of myths as well as imaginary mythological characters may attach oneself to a particular story and characters in an essential sense. In this context, the challenge lies in the search for one's true self through myth which appears like a search for an essential self (Bedetti, 1988). On the other hand, you are going to talk about the Buddhist view that is not in favour of an essential self.

Naomi: I think that is why we do need to use myth with a particular awareness. Let me give a few more practical examples with underlying messages.

Jean Huston (2012) takes great stories such as the Odyssey, the search for the Grail or the story of Jesus and uses these tales as templates for weaving in psychological and spiritual exercises. Houston knows that we can live more than one "mythic" life. Sometimes her own life turns out to be the journey of Odysseus paying visits to different islands of consciousness and reality, and

encountering monsters who eventually become great teachers. Sometimes her life results in the quest for a grail of knowledge.

Sharin: What is your message? Do you want to keep the perspective of myth and facts of the story side by side to show how one myth or different myths can be created from the facts (Morford & Lenardon, 2007)?

Naomi: Apparently the purpose is simple: to know how a person makes meaning of life, or sees and signifies human experience. Life writing with self reflection can change the approach towards our lives. When we write about our life through the lenses of myth, the writing becomes therapeutic and reflects a benevolent universe (Murdock, 2004 b; Rohr, 1997, p. 29). But behind this purpose, there is the purpose which is to know the interiority of oneself (Sels, 2011). Myths, folktales and stories are a way of knowing the unknown landscape of mind through symbols and metaphors that appeal universally, yet hold the different cultural lore from where it originates. It is both continuous and discontinuous with language. It is continuous because we communicate the stories through language, and discontinuous because the meanings of the story go beyond language (Lauter, 1984).

Sharin: So we need to be aware that mythic language and characters are pointing to something. It is like finger pointing to moon. We should not confuse the finger pointing towards the moon with the moon itself.

Apart from this practical aspect of my concerns, there is also another immanent danger in these mythological stories. Have you thought what type of confusion the archetypal characters<sup>21</sup> and

---

<sup>21</sup> According to Carl Jung, archetype refers to the existence of personified forms in the psyche. These forms are the product of collective unconscious in our psyche as primordial, spontaneous and inherited patterns of thoughts and experience (De Coster 2010; Nicolson 2009; Relkse, 2007). Jung termed it as “collective unconscious”, because it operates unconsciously within the psyche of individuals and cultures through collective sharing. The idea of collective unconscious lies in a unity of ideas and forms underlying in every individual and culture, even through the individuals

metaphors of those stories may produce? These metaphors are like twilights, beautiful but deceptive in nature. The archetypal characters are always accused of being essentialized and having gender, ethnic, social and cultural biases as well as other limitations (Jobling, 2010).

Naomi: We are more keen to know how a person makes meaning from what happened and metaphors can be efficient vehicles for communicating personal truth in a writer's life (Camp, 2003; Murdock, 2004 a, b).

Sharin: I agree that metaphors have the power to give new perspectives in defining relative reality to some extent (Lackoff & Jhonson, 1980). But we need to be conscious that metaphor would lead us to focus on only those aspects of reality that the metaphor highlights; eventually this focus hides some aspects of reality (Lackoff & Jhonson, 1980). My next apprehension is regarding the archetypal characters, particularly the women characters in myths and fairy tales. These characters are not without sexual, cultural and racial biases (Jobling, 2010). You need to take the archetypes not as something that can give complete insight of a persona. Archetypes are all contextual and incomplete (Macku, 2013).

Naomi: Despite the limitations, the archetypes are useful! (Estes, 2008) For example, Charrisa Pinkola Estes sees the wild woman as archetypal feminine, as a particular characteristic of the deep feminine psyche (Estes, 2008). Don't misunderstand "wild" as out of control, but try to contemplate the multilayered persona that these images represent in the sense of living a natural and innocent life with innate integrity. Charrisa Estes (2008) takes this image beyond human embodiment, as 'transient sense of wild', which may be reflected in a story, a line in a poem, or a

---

and cultures may vary in many aspects. The common archetypes include male and female, God and the Devil, Goddess and Witch, father and brother, mother and sister, dragon, lion, priest, lover, hero, tree, snake, and so on.

sight (p. 5). This state can be spontaneously experienced by women during special moments including pregnancy, nursing the young, and attending to a love relationship. These representations are expressed through both men and women's body image such as Goddess, mother, maiden, oracle, lover, wise old man and hero are common regardless of the culture. These archetypes can give inner strength and guidance during crucial phases of life.

Let me give two examples that I have borrowed from Jean Houston's life (2012). When Jean's mother was pregnant with her, her father urged her to abort the baby. Every night Jean's mother dreamt that a limousine came to take her to a temple to meet the Goddess Athena who would talk to her about keeping the baby and together they would laugh and sing. These dreams would make her protect the baby in the womb. The second example is from Jean's conversation with Saint Mother Teresa on the God-self within, an active archetype which is sometimes seen as 'the beloved' by spiritual seekers including Christians, Sufis, Sikhs, devotees of Lord Krishna and Rama. Jean once asked Mother Teresa: "How does it happen that you're able to do these things that most international development organizations can do only with immense trouble?" Mother said: "My dear, it's because I'm so deeply in love." Jean asked, "You are in love, Mother? Would you mind telling me who you are in love with?" Mother said, "Not at all. I'm in love with Jesus. I'm married to Jesus." Jean said, "Well, of course, all nuns are." Mother said, "No, you don't understand, I really am. I have such a love for Jesus that I feel the presence of Jesus everywhere — in that day-old child that was left at the convent door who needs a life and an education, or that leper who comes to me and wants to be of some use in the world. I see Christ in that child and that leper" (Houston, 2012). Houston thinks that it was the collective archetype of Christ which appeared as a beloved form to Mother Teresa.

After giving these heart touching stories, do I need to explain more about how intimate relation human psyche has with the archetypes?

Sharin: Well, I enjoyed both of the stories and to some extent, I am convinced that archetypes are a very engaging way to communicate what is happening in the mind. However, you have not clarified the paradoxes of women archetypes in terms of gender prejudices. The women archetypes are often seen as the representatives of so called feminine force. We can see the role of women archetypes in Joseph Campbell's hero's journey (Nicholson, 2011). It is the man who makes the journey, goes through the adventure and discovers treasures. Here woman is the Goddess figure who is the ultimate answer and guide to the hero's journey. It is the same in the Grail stories where feminine archetypes are the mother or the lover of the hero, to whom the hero resorts whenever he wishes. This sort of projection can be very patriarchal in the sense that it objectifies women as something that can be claimed or possessed by men. On the other hand, the masculine force is seen as an independent heroic figure, the warrior and the agent of choosing his destiny.

Naomi: Campbell's way of seeing the feminine force in life through woman's image is parallel to Carl Jung's feminine figure "anima", which is relevant to both women's as well as men's consciousness (Relke, 2007). Jung thinks that the anima in men and anima in women operates differently. You should not reject this idea immediately because the feminine force has been perceived in a different way; it is different from the way gender equality is measured. What is the role of anima in our psyche? She is both positive and negative. She is positive when she represents the wisdom of life in the form of wise women such as Eve and Aphrodite, lovers, mothers; again she can assume negative roles; for example the bad witch or the seductive maiden when she brings out the chaos of life (Relke, 2007). It is quite similar to the way Hinduism sees the nature of the feminine in the form of Goddess, who is both the illusion as well as liberation (Nikhilananda,

1842). No wonder that in Campbell's (2004) story, the hero finds the ultimate solace in a woman who is symbol of the highest wisdom. I am surprised that in terms of seeing woman as the highest wisdom, East and West become the same. In Indian *Tantra* as well as *Tantric* Buddhist iconography, the highest wisdom of self is symbolized as woman where everyone finds a home (Shaw, 1995). Instead of searching for gender equality, if you can see this approach as a creative complementary interaction between a feminine and a masculine force in a person's journey for self-discovery, you can see potential in these stories for women (Deida, 2005; Estes, 2004).

Sharin: But we need to take into consideration that Jung's views are highly influenced by social ideas about women in his time (Cauthen, 1996). There is strong resistance against the use of gendered terms such as feminine and masculine (Bernard, 2005). Patriarchy is heavily invested and interested in this feminine archetype (Goldenberg, 1985).

Naomi: Feminist resistance against feminine archetypes is understandable. It is related to the origin of feminism as a response to the oppression of patriarchy. This oppression is based on essentialist approaches to woman as "feminine"; an object that is inferior to man and the masculine. Second wave feminists are mostly focused on identity as a site of gender struggle and fought for equal rights of women into all spheres of society. As part of strategic politics, they had to reject potential difference of essence between men and women (Breines, 2002). With the evolution of feminist scholarship, other feminist schools, especially after the second wave, redefined the feminine in a new way which has agency, subjectivity and choice of embodiment, while at the same time having distinctive features that are not the same as masculinity (Diaz et al., 2010; Nicholson, 2009). The feminine is certainly not a woman in an essential sense. However, compared to other images, woman's embodiment better symbolizes the feminine aspect of our consciousness. In this case, feminine and masculine refer to particular types and the nature of their distinctive agency is seen

in the context of a relationship of agency in communion with each other (masculine and feminine) (Wilber, 1997). To understand the polarity, the gaze needs to be shifted from the point of view of “power over” to “power of”; from a dualistic or oppositional relationship to a complementary and non-dual relationship between feminine and masculine aspects, symbols and images.

There is hope for reclaiming the feminine aspects of our embodiment from the trap of patriarchal shackles of past contexts. With the rise of feminist consciousness, the feminine figures have now changed in women’s psyche and the stories of the Goddesses are now interpreted with more feminist values (Cauthen, 1996). Lauter has found that while women artists prior to the twentieth century were very much captured by patriarchal conventions in the images of mother figures, more recent artists were found to be relatively free to reveal the true scenario of mothering in the Modern world including its internal contradictions (Lauter, 1985 in Cauthen, 1996). Moreover, the female archetypes can function as tools to go beyond the dualistic projections of mind; particularly in terms of the divine and the human (Cauthen, 1996; Nicholson, 2009). The dualistic mind makes a huge contribution to the patriarchal mindset in terms of creating hierarchical ways to view reality (Cauthen, 1996). Often archetypes blur the borders between sacred and profane. It connects us to the divine in a non-dual and non-binary way. Therefore, the use of archetypes from a feminist perspective can assist the emergence of new form of feminist subjectivity (Nicholson, 2008; Nicholson, 2011). In this regard, the female archetypes need new expression and a new context for feminist purposes (Gersch, 2013).

Sharin: If the feminine archetypes have feminist potential, can feminist subjectivity be brought in to Joseph Campbell’s hero’s story? Can the hero be a woman?



I like the way the hero exercises the agency and freedom of choice through facing barriers and ordeals as well as meeting enemies, allies and mentors on the path (Hogan, 2000). It is very practical.

Naomi: If you view this mythic story as a journey of self-discovery, then it can be the same for both the male and female hero at the archetypal level (Gannon, 1983). But at a personal level, male and female experiences can be different because of the different roles and opportunities afforded for each individual in our society. Obviously, one of the determining factors in this difference is sex and gender (Gannon, 1983). However differences can also arise due to class, race, culture and age.

You can follow Jean Houston's formula of using the basic patterns, which include separation from home, the trials, and the return, and enrich the patterns with your own archetypes, metaphors and symbols that are compatible with a feminist subjectivity (Houston, 2013; Murdock, 2005).

Sharin: I think Jean Houston's formula sounds quite appropriate for what I would like to do.

Naomi: There are also other options but I am afraid you will be annoyed as they are the pure products of feminist thought!

Sharin: Now I am interested! Please tell!

Naomi: Murdock thinks when women follow the masculine approach to the quest of a hero, it may result in academic and professional success, as well as similar sorts of economic, social and political freedoms like men (Murdock, 1990, 2005). Murdock critiques the particular masculine quest that a woman undertakes due to the patriarchal influence in our society (Murdock, 1990). In this quest, male figures are the role models and masculine attributes, such as control, undertaking

challenges, exercising authority are the guiding force. On the other hand, the feminine attributes, such as nurturing, creativity, emotional expressions are rejected as inferior and passive which often results in inferiorizing the persona of female relationships like that of the mother. Following a masculine oriented model, a woman ignores the feminine; the nurturing, creative and intuition based approaches to life. Murdock thinks Campbell's model does not address the wound that the rejection or suppression of the feminine aspects of woman causes. This wound needs to be healed for a woman's spiritual development. In this context, Murdock developed the heroine's model derived in part from Campbell's model of the heroic quest. However, the language and metaphors of the stages are aligned to meet the feminist purpose. This model also follows a circular path in the sense that there is phase of return (Murdock, 1990).

Murdock's model (1990) as circular path moves clockwise: the beginning of a heroine's journey starts with a rejection of the feminine as inferior and powerless. This is the misunderstanding that the patriarchal society enforces. The journey continues with a total submersion into the familiar outer heroic journey including competing with masculine allies to achieve the boon of independence (Murdock, 1999, p.3). At some point of this journey, the heroine realizes the limitations of overlooking the feminine part. This realization makes her value the feminine in a new way and provides a new understanding of life. In the return process, the heroine learns how to integrate both feminine and masculine aspects in a more balanced way.

Sharin: So Murdock's heroine's journey is specifically for healing the scars from the rejection of the feminine in women's life, and finding the divine self in the form of a divine female image.

Naomi: When do you get to the question of the divine self? I want to remind you of something that we have talked about before. Archetypes are one of the ways to understand the aspects of the divine

self that can be comprehensible to our ordinary mind (Estes, 2004). The divine self is limitless, it is beyond images and attributes.

Sharin: Murdock's model is intriguing, but it is limited to women who want to find their subjectivity through reclaiming the feminine aspects.

Naomi: Murdock accepts that her model may not be applicable to all women. At the same time, the model can also be used by men (Murdock, 1990). It depends on personal history and different natures of psyche of individuals. The potential of this model lies in celebrating feminist subjectivity through reclaiming the divine female image in the form of the Goddess figure. A similar potential comes from the practice of choosing a new heroine journey from different mythological stories on Goddess figures (Nicholson, 2009).

Sharin: So you would like to use Murdock's model?

Naomi: Yes. But this model is not enough to tell the stories that I lived. That is why I am thinking to use more stories.

Sharin: Readers will be utterly confused. Isn't it enough that I would follow Campbell's patterns, and you would choose Murdock's one?

Naomi: My spiritual practice and upbringing are rooted in the culture that has an enriched Indian inheritance. Without a mythology that reflects the landscape of that area, it would be very difficult to express some of my experiences which are coded with distinctive cultural relationships, symbols, metaphors and archetypes.

Sharin: Till now, we have talked about the universal aspects of myth, archetypes, and metaphors. And now you are saying something different?

Naomi: Do not misunderstand me! I do not mean that East and West are different in oppositional and dualistic ways. The way people choose myth, archetypes and metaphors indicate their connection to particular culture as well as personal choices in life (Houston, 1996). Yes, part of my psyche has connection with Western ideals, values, cultures, folktales and archetypes, but at the same time, part of my psyche is full of cultural values, codes, stories, and archetypes that have an Indian aura. This is due to a combination of many factors including my upbringing in Bangladesh which has a similar culture to India, my deep connection with Indian mythology and archetypes, my early fascination with Indian movies and songs, and adopting the spiritual tradition which has deep linkage within Indian spiritual thoughts, values and iconography of female and male images.

Sharin: Which Indian mythological story do you want to choose? Most of the stories are like the typical grail stories where the male hero does everything and females remain passive with the excuse that she is the reason for whom the male hero does everything. Feminist subjectivity is absent in these stories.

Naomi: Whether feminist subjectivity is absent or feminist subjectivity has been interpreted in non-Western ways is a huge debate. Therefore, I am going to choose the story that has the least possibility for invoking this controversy on feminist issues – *Savitri* – the great epic of the Indian Saint Sri Aurobindo that is both a legend and a symbol (Sri Aurobindo, 1997). The story is about Princess Savitri who rescued her husband from death. The tale *Savitri* is found in the ancient Vedic literature *Mahabharata* (Aurbindo, 1999; Bhattacharjee, 1991; Deshpande, 2009). Sri Aurobindo has rewritten the story as a symbol of the journey towards divinity and the infinite. His way of portraying Savitri has the potential for a feminist subjectivity.

Sharin: It should be. We should not forget that Sri Aurobindo was educated in the West and his spiritual companion who had a profound influence in writing the epic was a French woman, Mirra Alfassa (Banerje, 2012; Raina, 2002; Sarkar, 1967).

Naomi: I am not sure whether we should draw any conclusions in such a simplistic way. However, any mythological story is bound by time and place and where it was born (Campbell, 1998).

Sharin: It looks like the Savitri archetype is related to our spiritual awareness. In that sense, it is transpersonal in nature (Wilber, 2005).

Naomi: Wilber's approach to transpersonal archetypes is based on deep understanding of Eastern mysticism, where form and formless are intertwined, and form becomes the means to understand the formless aspects (Howard, 2005; Nicholson, 2008). Thus transpersonal archetypes can facilitate an entry into the nonconceptual and formless reality of spiritual experience.

Sharin: I think the idea to use Savitri's story is not bad. This approach may become a strategy to explore how a person gives meaning to different experiences of life. This strategy hints at a particular cultural flavour or colouring hidden within a person's psyche.

Naomi: Savitri will not isolate us from the universal pattern of the hero/heroine's journey. Savitri's universal aspects cannot be denied. For example, in mythology and folktales, we have found a common theme: the heroine's separation from her comfort zone (Murdock, 1994). In the famous tale of Beauty and the Beast, Beauty leaves her father's home to stay with the Beast. In the Sumerian mythological story, Innanna leaves her known kingdom (Nicholson, 2008). In Savitri's story, Savitri leaves her palace to marry Satyavan, a prince in exile. This pattern can be interpreted as a process of individualization for a woman to find self-knowledge, autonomy and love (Murdock, 1994).

Sharin: Look, I think it is true that Savitri's story has universal aspects. But I am concerned that if we cling to a single story taken from Indian mythology, our cultural politics of in-betweenness, and hybridity of blurring the categorization will remain very weak. Don't you feel connected to western stories like 'Alice in Wonderland'?

Naomi: I do. Thanks for reminding me. We can use this story to explain certain phases of life.

Sharin: Yes, take these two stories. This will make sense for invoking a third space, the in-between cultural space in the life journey.

Naomi: Actually I am thinking to incorporate another story, the Sumerian Goddess Inanna's story.

Sharin: It will be too many I think!

Naomi: What if a woman feels connected to multiple stories in different phases of her life?

Sharin: I can only see chaos and incoherence ahead. By the way, for the convenience of the readers, I will keep on reminding you that the play of different archetypes can happen within a single human psyche, which may or may not have similar expression at the outer level (Estes, 2008; Houston, 2012). For example, Mother Teresa's spiritual experience of Christ's love resulted in her love for the downtrodden people and the children all over the world (Houston, 2012).

Naomi: Exactly! Savitri's love for Satyavan may refer to the form of experiencing a special way of being for this first time and pursuing that way of being through challenges, choices and sacrifices.

Sharin: Thanks for giving me hints! It gives an idea how this perspective will be used.

Naomi: We should remember that although we need to know ourselves through archetypes, we should also differentiate and individuate from them (Nicholson, 2008). As I said, the stories of the archetype cannot totally address the complexities of human life. The ultimate expression of this psychodrama can never be represented in a literal sense (Sels, 2011). By the use of different stories, I want to explore the freedom to express our inner complications and problems, as well as our continuous austerities and ardent desires to understand them.

Sharin: That our life story will do. Before we move to new chapter where real life experiences will merge with the stories of hero/ heroine, Savitri and Alice, would you like to give a brief description of the stories to keep the readers on track?

Naomi: Sure, let's start with the story of Savitri.

Savitri's story is about saving her husband Satyavan's life through strong determination, inner strength, devotion, will power, intense prayer and spiritual practice. Through this love story, the epic narrates the archetypal journey of the soul with indomitable spirit and persistence (Jhonston, 2014; Sri Bhattacharjee, 1991; Sri Aurobindo, 1997). In this story, the feminist subjectivity is expressed through a combination of woman's choice agency, feminine attributes like receptivity and grace and spiritual values and practice like persistence, compassion, devotion, meditative silence and wisdom.

Sharin: Are you aware that Savitri's story can be critiqued for invoking stereotyped Indian womanhood?

Naomi: Although the story is widely used to represent ideal Indian womanhood with traditional stereotypical religious-cultural elements (e.g. devotion and surrender to husband, saints and in-laws), the actual tale in the *Mahabharata* and the later modified version by Sri Aurobindo speak of

the grandeur and glory of spiritual truths and strength through the symbol of a traditional woman who leads a life of devotion, surrenders to the divine and finds a relational subjectivity in giving happiness to the beloved one who reciprocates this love. By devoting herself to righteousness and virtue, while at the same time being independent and making choices, Savitri's subjectivity has become both independent and relational which is quite compatible with my quest based on devotion and surrender and at the same time free choice and agency. By placing Savitri's archetype from ancient Indian Vedic literature along with other Western archetypes in the narrative, I will bring out plural and nuanced understandings of subjectivity through performative cultural politics in a space of multiplicity, liminality and the in-betweenness of borders and categorization.

In this narrative, I have particularly highlighted Savitri's indomitable spirit for pursuing a spiritual path out of love – a feeling that invokes spontaneity and intimacy. Savitri's persistence symbolizes the nature of my spiritual pursuit that is driven not by any materialistic gain or merit, but by deep spiritual reason with which I feel at home.

Sharin: You also have Inanna's story, right? I still do not understand what the use is of another feminine archetype when you already have the story of Savitri?

Naomi: The presence of different archetypes connects the sameness and difference of women's experience across cultures, time and history in one rosary. The Sumerian Goddess Inanna's descent story to the underworld and her return to heaven has been widely used in feminist works to reveal women's internal and external journeys of finding a new self and finding different perspectives on life's questions and complexities (Nicholson, 2008; Remy, 2005). Women have personalized the story of Inanna in different contexts of their life stories. Personalized aspects of the interpretation have enriched the timeless appeal of this ancient story from the past to the present, from myth to



Modern times, and the Goddess archetype to ordinary women's life journey. In our story, Inanna's story symbolizes the inner and outer journey of self-transformation.

Sharin: Fair enough.

Naomi: Besides the stories of Inanna and Savitri, Alice in Wonderland will serve a different purpose. It is a famous novel by English author Charles Lutwidge Dodgson under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll. Although Alice's adventure in a fantasy world and encounter with peculiar characters appear nonsensical and childish, the story contains truths and teaching about life through different symbolism (Davis, 2010). Hundreds of years after this novel was written, the story is used to explore different meaning of life's internal and external complexities, personal growth and development. As a child, I could connect with Alice's character without knowing the implications of her symbolic trip to wonderland. Alice's trip lies deep in my psyche as an adventure reflecting innocent, independent, imaginative, intrepid and curious aspects of a quest for life's meaning. Unlike Inanna and Savitri, Alice's journey is different in the sense that this journey makes Alice wiser to deal with the external and internal paradoxes of the world. She relies on her own judgment with simplicity and ordinariness as she surfs through inner and outer perplexities (Davis, 2010). These perplexities are expressed through the weird characters and their conversations in the wonderland. In my own autoethnography, I have used this tale to explain an outer-inner phase of finding voice, self-reliance and agency.

Sharin: Additionally, it will give a culturally fluid sense to the narrative.

Naomi: Exactly.

Sharin: There is also the hero/heroine's journey. Isn't it too confusing?

Naomi: I think it is quite enriching. Maureen Murdock's heroine's quest can be used as a way to discover and revalue the feminine within oneself and others.

Sharin: Well, I am excited about the potential of hero's journey. Joseph Campbell has found a universal pattern in the journeys of all heroes in human history regardless of East and West. The pattern goes like this: a separation from a comfortable zone, a penetration to some source of power in the forms of trials, learning and a life-enhancing return (Campbell, 2004, p.32).

Naomi: There is a speciality about this pattern; through this pattern, multiple forms of the figure of hero in human histories have kindled the oneness and 'singleness of the human spirit in its aspirations, powers, vicissitudes, and wisdom' (Campbell, 2004, p. 33). This pattern also reflects human being's innate connection to the cosmos, to human being's experience on this earth and the universe itself where the circle as a pattern keeps on playing in different ways; from the cycle of day to night, from starting of a month in each year to the end day of every year, from birth to death and so on. This circular pattern also plays a role in religious belief systems like Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, this pattern is found as a union with the divine in heaven, descent to the earth and a return to the divine through a process of trials and learning. In Buddhism, the enlightenment process is seen as a return to mind's pure nature or home. In Hinduism, the pattern is evident in Lord Ram's separation from the kingdom, his exile in the forest, the war with Ravana and the return to the kingdom to assume the position of righteous king. Campbell quotes Lau-Tsu (Campbell, 2004, p. 175) to summarize life's connection to a pattern with deep insight:

All things are in process, rising and returning. Plants come to blossom, but only to return to the root. Returning to the root is like seeking tranquility. Seeking tranquility is like moving toward destiny. To move toward destiny is like eternity. To know eternity is enlightenment, and not to recognize eternity brings

disorder and evil. Knowing eternity makes one comprehensive; comprehension makes one broadminded; breadth of vision brings nobility; nobility is like heaven. The heavenly is like Tao. Tao is the Eternal. The decay of the body is not to be feared.

Emotionally we still feel powerfully connected to the pattern of the hero/heroine's journey that appear in different mythologies. It links us together and forms part of our collective memory, history and imagination as human beings (Arenson, 2006, p. 8). By linking our life story to this universal pattern of separation and return, we connect the personal quest for knowledge of self to the oneness of the cosmos, universe and human civilization's journey for greater wisdom. At the same time, we can resist the separation and isolation of this story from humanity as a whole and refuse to posit oneness and individuality in binary relation.

Sharin: Although I like the pattern, I do not have any idea how the pattern will work in the autoethnography! You are very creative! Why do you not tell me something about this as a conclusion of this section?

Naomi: Yes, I am always full of ideas. What about this: the circle of the story starts as an ordinary learner of life in the childhood phase and comes back to the same through traversing a path of new experiences, learning and transformation. Just like a student who goes through transformation through learning in different ways, this subjectivity is in the process of continuous transformation. By seeing life as a circle of returning to this symbolic way, I wanted to explore an open ended embracing subjectivity which values interdependences, flexibility, fluidity, transience and nuances, at the same time retains agency, choice and voice. It does not want to dominate or control out of ego or superiority but at the same time it is empowered with curiosity, independence, flexibility, compassion and wisdom. In some ways, this subjectivity is akin to freedom since it is way of being free from the control of negative emotions. Freedom in our narrative is used in a

multilayered way as both conditioned, finite, negotiated as well as vast, limitless transpersonal way of being. In this big circle, multiple circles are created through life events, through travelling and returning to same place in a different way. In the next section, readers will find out how these ideas will look like in relation to autoethnography.

Sharin: I am really excited! Let's see how these ideas unfold in the next section.

## **6:2. The Story of an Ordinary Woman**

**The great adventure**

**began**

**in an ordinary life**



Picture 1: When she was just an ordinary student of life (from Personal Collection)

Like any other human being, she began her life journey on this earth as an ordinary student of life's wisdom. She played, laughed and cried with the flow of life with an innocent simplicity. There was no grasping and no plan. It was living in "emptiness" where everything arises and dissolves spontaneously like a play. As soon as she began to grow, culture, family and society started to impose rules to regulate her dreams, hopes, wishes and desires. She was not submissive to these rules. She responded and protested. Soon the innocence, naivety and learning with childlike simplicity and joy disappeared under her harsh arguments and anger against these rules.



Picture 2<sup>22</sup>: Where does this girl come from?

When she reached puberty, she was told to give up Western dress and wear the traditional attire. This dress is called *Selwar Kameez* – long trouser, a long body shirt and a long scarf to cover the breasts. All adult and adolescent women around her were wearing it! She protested vigorously pointing to the discrimination: ‘men should also wear the traditional dresses of Bangladesh all the time! Why are they allowed to wear Western clothes (shirts and pants)?’ She realized that if she would not wear this *Selwar Kameez*, she had to face derogatory looks and comments from the community. Giving up the clothes she liked and to put on the clothes she did not want constituted the demise of a freedom she had. She grew up with an immense hatred and anger against these clothes. To her, it became a symbol of oppression.

She was born and brought up in a simple middle class family in Bangladesh. Their religion is Islam and the culture is Bengali. This “not so easy combination” is rooted in a complicated history of Bangladesh. Once upon a time, Bangladesh was “the Bengal”, part of greater India. Historical Bengal has always been a melting pot of different races. A historian friend said that her facial

---

<sup>22</sup>‘The beginning’. Surreal Art by Christian Schöle (Schöle, 2017a).



features indicated that some of her ancestors might be Mongolian. This is very much possible due to an untraceable mingling of different races throughout the history in Bengal!

Bengal was the place where Hinduism and Buddhism ruled for many years. These aspects are still ingrained in the festivals and literature of Bangladesh. It was the land where *Tantra* (both Hindu and Buddhist tantra) flourished and feminine aspects of the divine were worshiped. When Islam arrived in this land from the Middle East, it was integrated into Bengali culture. Their co-existence had tensions as well as mutual understanding and harmonious blending. With the arrival of British colonial power, Bengal became the center of the union between Indian and British thoughts in India. One of the examples of this meeting of cultures was the European influence on Bengali literature. Bengali literature was full of passionate devotion to the divine. European ideas and literature influenced Bengali literature to move towards human's relation with each other (Bhattacharya & Renganathan, 2015; Islam, 2014). During the British period, prominent Bengali writers like Rabindranath Tagore merged the divine and human world in a unique way. The merging created multiplicity and non-duality in the meaning of human desire and relation to the mundane world and the divine. Non-duality does not mean that no difference exists between creator and creations. Rather non-duality is an ambivalent play of difference and sameness, one and many in a non-binary way. Non-duality is the possibility of plurality, at the same time it exists beyond this. Even in contemporary times, politics, human relations, mysticism and God all are enmeshed in Bengali literature without any clear line of demarcation. From a Western perspective, this is so obscure! She was brought up reading Bengali literature and unconsciously interpreted the reality from this obscure perspective.

She takes pride in the part of history when Bengal's literature, social and political thoughts met Western enlightenment thinking. She sees it as receptivity, a power and capacity to be changed for

growth and evolution. During the time of division in 1947, Bengal was divided: East Bengal (the present Bangladesh) joined Pakistan and West Bengal remained as a part of India.

The reason behind this separation appears very weird to her – since East Bengal had a Muslim majority, it appeared ‘better’ to be part of an Islamic state ‘Pakistan’ rather than India which was presumed to be ruled by dominant Hindus! She thinks it would be better if the two Bengals would never be separated. However, in reality, history was much more complex than her simple interpretation.

Pakistani authority did not accept Bengali culture including women’s outfits (wearing *Shari*, ornaments, flowers and adorning the forehead with ‘bindis’<sup>23</sup>), having a Bengali calendar and new year and overwhelmingly loving the literature of Rabindranath Tagore<sup>24</sup> who was not a Muslim writer and poet. To Pakistani authorities, these aspects were considered to be closely associated with Hinduism. Bengali alphabets, language, arts and literature which had connection with Greater Indian thoughts did not connect with the agenda of an Islamic fundamentalist view as well as the Pakistan government. The Muslim culture of Pakistan and the Bengali culture of Bangladesh did not go hand in hand which ultimately ended in a liberation war and the birth of an independent country “Bangladesh”. Her family carried the historical lineage of Bengal – a tension, mutual understanding as well as amalgamation among Islam, Bengali culture and Western liberal ideas. It

---

<sup>23</sup> A red dot worn in the middle of the eyebrows.

<sup>24</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, Bengali poet, writer and musician, the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. His works reshaped Bengali literature and music, as well as Indian art with contextual Modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Patke, 2013; Sigi, 2006). He is highly revered both in India and Bangladesh and his song became the national anthem for both of these countries. His works weave Indian spirituality, culture, society, politics and humanist ideals of the West in a unique way. His literary works sprang up from deep belief and experience of largely universal themes of God, divine experience and oneness between man, nature and God (Tagore, 2004; Watson, 1973).

was a third space. Within this third space, she built up her own third space. Her imagination was full of characters from Western fairy tales and she loved Western clothing, values and Western lifestyles. At the same time she was drawn to Hindu Gods and Goddesses, history and culture of India, and Bengali literature.



Picture 3: In between father and mother: A third space within third space (from Personal Collection)

Her father is a good liberal Muslim with strong secular political values. He regularly prays in the mosque five times a day, he does not take or give bribes, he does not have a beard, he does not wear the traditional Muslim outfit, he is against any fundamentalist party, he votes for a secular political party and he appreciates the non-sectarian spiritual depth of the *Bauls*<sup>25</sup>, and Rabindranath Tagore's songs and poetries. He studied in Germany, travelled to many parts of the world, worked for the United Nations and values Western science, education and their egalitarian transparent systems. Her father's secular values had a huge influence in her life. He wants his daughter to be financially and psychologically independent and to pursue a career. However, he does not like his

---

<sup>25</sup> Mystic wanderers of Bengal who composed spiritual songs based on non-sectarian religious values.

daughter to wear Western dress, talk to any male friend or travel alone for spiritual purposes that are not related to Islam.

Her mother was born and brought up in a maternal family. She is a very pretty, caring and affectionate woman. Although she wanted to be economically independent, she chose to be a housewife and give her full time to the children. She is always there to respond to any slightest need of the family members. The whole family is dependent on her care, affection and witty house management.

Although she did not appreciate her mother for a long time, at some point in her life she could value her mother's compassion and wisdom in managing the little things of life. Her mother's words 'do not be like me and be a careerist independent woman' was like a mantra to her from very early age.



Picture 4: Once she had a good life (from Personal Collection, Afghanistan)

Just a few years after her birth, she moved with her parents to Kabul, Afghanistan for her father's job. It was the time of the Najibullah Government in Afghanistan. Kabul looked very different from

the way it looks now. She enjoyed a good life there with a nice school, good food, lovely toys and the utmost care and love from her parents. As a part of the cosmic law of impermanence, these joyful moments did not last long. The fighting between the Taliban and Soviet army escalated and the family had to come back to Bangladesh. Her father became unemployed and they took a small flat in Dhaka the capital of Bangladesh. Her brother was born. The family went through psychological and financial struggles. Life lost its charms and she began to feel uprootedness as if she belonged no where and to no one. Amidst this crisis, her sanctuary was the school. Her father chose a good school for her after a long search! The headmistress of the school was a renowned writer who had a wonderful capacity to teach through story telling which she internalized from very beginning. She used to get lost in the story and her imagination forgetting the reality around her. Her good time in that school also did not last long. From class two to class five, she moved with her family every year, from one place to another for her father's unstable job. Every time she embraced a place, school or people as her own, she had to move and leave them behind. When she finished primary school, her schools turned out to be places of learning based on accurate memorization of what was written in the book and how to produce that information with good handwriting. Beating, scolding and insulting were part of imposing this process in a child's mind. She longed for a creative way of learning. Her sense of non-belongingness and sighs at life's transience increased day by day. Life's sadness made her aware of the fleeting nature of all phenomena. When she grew up and first heard Buddhist teaching that all phenomena is impermanent including the joy of life, she had no hesitation in connecting with its message immediately.



Picture 5<sup>26</sup>: She was always there with hope and sigh (Taylor, 2014).

She was growing up in a time when Bangladesh began a new democratic regime and entered into the era of globalization with a woman prime minister as well as a woman leader in the oppositional political party. But violence against women and the insecurity of women were increasing at a rampant rate, almost at the equal pace with women's economic, social and political advancement and mobility. Her mobility, play, interaction, dancing, singing and drawing all were restricted for security, cultural and religious reasons. She was not even confident to go outside alone in fear of "Eve Teasing" (a form of harassment including abusive comments, gestures and other interactions) on the road. She loved the way Western kids, especially girls enjoyed life with freedom and safety. This was "the West|" which was broadcasted on TV and written in stories. The "West" to her was a place where everyone was treated with value and dignity. From a very young age, she wanted to have a life of her own in the West|.

---

<sup>26</sup>Maggie Taylor's surreal art.



Picture 6: “A seeker”. Christian Schole’s Art ‘Moon Drops’ (Schole, 2017b)

She was taught to pray as a Muslim. Although she had faith in God as a supreme power and controller of everything the way God was introduced to her appeared a bit unreasonable. She simply could not believe that God could be someone who was always judging her on the basis of what types of clothes she was wearing, how she was talking and what she was watching! It did not make sense that God could make a place like a hell to burn people who did not follow his prescribed codes. She always looked for a benevolent God who is kind, wise and understanding. One day, she felt to pray to a statue of mother figure in her house. Although she was advised that it would be a sin, she did not listen. She danced, sang and prayed around it. She did it quite naturally. She felt an immense connection with Hindu Gods and Goddesses who were worshiped at the houses and temples of some of the neighbours and her father’s closest friend’s house. Even her dream was mixed with Hindu and Islamic symbols. When she would see a statue of Jesus Christ and saints like Mother Teresa, she would naturally feel extreme reverence and love for the divine. Although no one told her, she knew that all religions came from one God. To her, there was no superiority of any religion over others and she felt that one should be free to choose which path one should follow to reach God. Her introduction to Islam did not value her innate openness. While pursuing

a different spiritual path, now she wonders what would happen if her initial relation to Islam took place with more loving kindness and openness! How would her spiritual journey look like?

The ideal women from the family whose examples were given to her were careerist and at the same time, family oriented. Most importantly they were married at a certain age and had children. In that sense, there was some freedom for women in her family and society. But this freedom remained within certain boundaries. For example, women could travel alone, but only for academic and career purposes. If a woman felt to travel for holiday purposes, she had to be accompanied by relatives or husband. Women could wear whatever they wanted as long as it was in the category of traditional clothes. Women could talk the way they want, as long as it was not radical and disobedient to their elders. Women could pursue spirituality only if that spiritual journey was within the inherited religion of birth. But she searched for deeper meaning of freedom going beyond this boundary. When she wanted to make deeper sense of freedom, ‘the great adventure of the divine discovery<sup>27</sup>’ began. In this continuous discovery, she began to discover the unfolding of different meanings for what she sought. She became a seeker in crossing the boundary at the point where something stopped, at the same time something began to be present (Bhabha, 1994).

---

<sup>27</sup>This phrase is taken from Mirra Alfassa’s quote (Sri Aurobindo Society, 2015, p. 1). Mira Alfassa is known as ‘The Mother’, the spiritual companion of Indian Saint Sri Aurobindo (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1999-2017).



**Walking**

**in**

**the shadow**



Picture7: In a space of her own just for some time (Japan, 2007, Personal Collection)

She wanted to be an independent woman who had full control over life. At first, she wanted to be a doctor, then a fashion designer and at last, a famous human rights lawyer. She was extremely concerned about rape, sexual violence, abuse and the restrictions that women were going through everyday, the discrimination people face due to religion and poverty, and the increasing disparity between rich and poor. She possessed extreme anger and hatred against people and community who supported patriarchal values. In response to this injustice, she became a radical feminist, atheist and communist. She did not stay on this extreme path and chose instead a liberal way in terms of feminism, politics and Islam. She argued with everybody about everything, from big political issues to tiny matters of ordinary life. Her reasoning was grounded in Western Enlightenment approaches to rationality, equality and freedom.

Her argumentative nature was vehemently discouraged by family and community. When she studied law, her argumentative nature turned out to be very helpful. She performed excellently in moot court competitions (mock trials for law students) and was selected to represent the Bangladesh team in international events. With this excuse, she could travel outside Bangladesh.

Every time she would represent her country, she would receive recognition for good performances. When she travelled outside Bangladesh, she experienced a sense of freedom that she always wanted. She could wear her favourite Western clothes and move freely with a sense of security. She always loved traveling abroad.



Picture 8: An ideal candidate for a bride! One of her pictures taken by a professional photographer (Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2006, Personal Collection)

In Bangladesh, she is fair-skinned. Her height, skin colour and family background are considered to be ideal for drawing the attention from high class families for their eligible sons. Since the age of sixteen, she had to hear marriage proposals and persuasion from family and community. She considered an arranged marriage to be the end of her dream to have her own life. As soon as she would be informed about the proposals, she would scream and protest in anger so violently and so ferociously that her mother would have no option but to drop the plan. Thank God that she is now thirty-four. In terms of arranged marriage in Bangladesh, a woman aged thirty-four is on the shelf.

Nowadays, whenever this issue is raised, she tries to handle it with calmness and kindness. It is one of the practical areas of her day to day Buddhist practice.

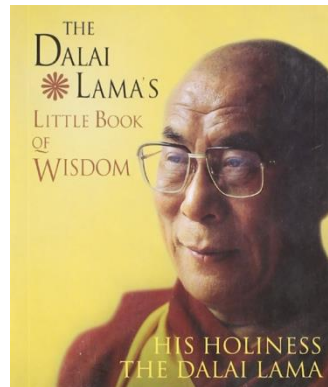


Picture 9: Her freedom extends, but her traditional attire remains the same (Mymensingh, Bangladesh, 2008, Personal Collection)

After completing a bachelor degree in Law, she started her professional life as a researcher for women at grass root level in Bangladesh. That job opened a new journey for her through personal, financial and social independence. She had the opportunity to travel to many parts of Bangladesh where she had never been before. Many of her friends were not allowed the privilege of travelling without parents or family members, even for professional purposes. In this regard, the support of her parents was quite helpful.

As part of her field trips, she could know the plight, struggle and the empowerment of rural women. She realized that she was confined in a Western liberal model of understanding women's agency, choice, and independence. Instead of analysing women's choice and agency through the dichotomous eyes of active/passive, independent/dependent, empowered/victim, she wanted to

understand how women's choice, agency and freedom mediate the existing cultural norms, values, relations and desire (Niyogi De, 2011; Pande, 2015). In this regard, the relationship between active/passive, domination/oppression and choice became blurred and complex (Niyogi De, 2011).



Picture 10: First love! (Picture: Deschene, 2010)

Something was always missing in her life. Apart from studying law and dreaming of leaving Bangladesh in search of freedom one day, she was exploring different religions including Buddhism and Hinduism. She was very drawn to the Buddhist approach on equanimity and compassion. She found that compared to other religious approaches, this tradition was more open, non-dogmatic and more focused on training one's mind. When she first read a book by the Dalai Lama, she became completely immersed in his words on loving-kindness and inner peace. It was as if she was a frog living in a small well which suddenly came out and heard the sound of the ocean with a childlike curiosity, wonder, bliss and grace. She wanted to integrate this approach into her every aspect of life. She yearned to learn meditation and walk on a spiritual path that would give her more serenity, calmness and kindness. She saw a different freedom on this path.

Why did she feel so drawn to the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism? Why not Theravada? She liked the Dalai Lama and his way of teaching, she loved the female enlightenment figures, and she was drawn to the mysticism of Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhist chanting, although in a foreign language, gave her a feeling of coming home. She spontaneously felt she knew this tradition from her past lives!



Picture 11: Sea and hills, beyond the borders sketched by others (Bangladesh, 2008, Personal Collection)

Like any other human beings, she had passed through phases of frustration and unhappiness but the phase of frustration between 2008 and 2009 was something very different. Her job made her more independent in terms of thinking, making choices and taking decision. This independence had a huge influence on the way she dealt with her frustration. She wanted to find a new way to deal with life's uncertain trajectory through transforming herself. As part of this endeavour, she looked inward and found herself very short tempered, snobbish and extremely sensitive when things did not go in her own way.

She felt that she had no control over her emotions. Often she was left with no choice on how to react. She realized that the ways she dealt with the problems of insecurity and discrimination in society as well as innumerable issues of sadness and complaints about ordinary life were based on extreme hatred, anger and high expectations. According to Buddhism, it was the delusionary nature of reality where one's negative emotions played a strong role in the interpretation of the world. She failed to recognize the distance between her expectations and the way reality unfolded. She understood the role of destructive emotions in intensifying her suffering. Buddhist teaching of mind training spoke deeply to her with a possibility of transforming the mind towards more positive emotions and experiencing the world in a new way. After a time of dilemma, confusions and wonder, she found her strongest voice. What did that voice say?



Picture 12: She is in black and white (Bangladesh, 2009, Personal Collections)

Her trip was like Alice's trip to Wonderland. At some point, Alice encountered the queen, king and the court in wonderland. The Queen had only one way of settling all difficulties, great or small. "Off with his head!" the Queen said, without even looking around (Hirschbein, 2010, p. 42). That

bought out Alice's strongest voice to discard all the weird rules, pre-conceptions and patterns. With Alice's scream, all the drama of wonderland ended.

The strongest voice within her ended a phase of life; a phase of hanging out in wonderland. It was the voice to transform the mind. She became immersed in reading Buddhist teaching and began to understand herself in the light of these teachings. Unfortunately, her choice to transform the mind through the Buddhist path was only understood by few. Most of the time, it was frowned upon, ridiculed and ignored. She needed to be in black and white: 'Your religion is either Islam or "others"/you are either Buddhist or non-Buddhist'. But to her, it was not so easy to be either black or white! She piled up complaints, grief and tears against the people who did not understand and respect her way. She understood that it was not easy to transform the mind very quickly when the situation was not favourable. She would need an environment where her path would be valued and she could learn to train the mind from good teachers. Wiping away her tears, she began to work for a scholarship to study in "the West" where people would understand her, accept the way she was and she could practice and learn Buddhist mind training without fear, shame, justification and explanation.

There is a Bengali Baul song on religion. It goes like this:

*A Bengali Baul<sup>28</sup> Song*

*'Everyone asks: "Lalan<sup>29</sup>, what's your religion in this world?"*

---

<sup>28</sup> The mystic wanderers in Bangladesh as well as West Bengal who integrated different religious elements to a non-sectarian spiritual path.

<sup>29</sup> Famous Bengali saint, mystic, and songwriter who inspired religious tolerance and non-sectarian spiritual ways.



*Lalan answers: "How does religion look?"*

*I've never laid eyes on it.*

*Some wear malas [Hindu rosaries] around their necks,*

*Some tasbis [Muslim rosaries], and so people say*

*they've got different religions.*

*But do you bear the sign of your religion*

*When you come or when you go (in this world)?' (Burman, 2005, p.121)*

She hoped one day everyone would embrace this message and appreciate beauty in diversity of calling God through different religions.

**A ray of light ...**



Picture 13: Welcome to Australia! Some of the gifts she received when she arrived in Australia: Australian Aboriginal welcome stick, rocks with Australian Aboriginal dot painting and the Australian National Flag (from Personal Collection, Perth, 2010)

At last her dream came true! She received full scholarship to pursue a Master degree in Human Rights in Australia. Initially, everything in Australia appeared perfect to her.



Picture 14: Open space (Fremantle, Australia 2010, Personal Collection)

Once she arrived in Australia, she found the life that she always dreamt of. All the sufferings took a holiday for a while before returning in new form.



Picture 15: Part of her being (Some of the objects of reverence which she loves to keep in her room, Perth, 2010, from Personal Collection)

She was by herself in Australia. There was no surveillance and no cultural or religious expectation from family and friends. The freedom to go to a Buddhist centre and attend Buddhist teaching was a big step for her. It was like entering into a kingdom which she had longed to explore for a long time. The more she learnt about Buddhist ways of training the mind through compassion and the wisdom of emptiness, the more she was fascinated by the depth of Buddhist teachings. She became a regular student at a local Tibetan Buddhist centre. She met wonderful Dharma students who were Westerners and to her utter surprise, had immense devotions to Guru, rituals, disciplines and other ethics. To some aspect, they were more Indian than her. They had special pujas on Christmas eve as well as the auspicious days in the Tibetan Buddhist calendar. She noticed that her Western friends, although wearing Western outfits in the temple, had some restrictions on dress as an expression of respect to the space of the temple. From them she began to learn how to do prostrations, how to offer water bowls and how to chant and pray. She loved these rituals. During the time of rituals, she loved to offer scones and chocolates to Buddhas. To her, there was a thin line between meditative experience and rituals. Sometimes, a ritual would become a meditative experience and a sitting meditation would appear like rituals. The management of the centre was

also very democratic where women students participated with their strong voice and opinions. Sometimes laywomen and men in the managing committees would advise the Tibetan lamas on the teachings. She found that in most of the cases, these lay women and men had a fine balance of traditional way of honouring a teacher without question and modern way of building partnership through questions and constructive feedback. There was a reciprocity in the relationship between Tibetan lamas and laywomen and men in terms of how to make the teaching more effective and engaging for the students and other administrative and financial issues of the temple.

She had no hesitation in accepting the mythic concepts of Tibetan Buddhism such as reincarnation of high Tibetan lamas. She met the young *Tulkus* (reincarnated masters) and felt a natural respect for them. To her, this continuity of the enlightened mind strengthens the bonding between teachers and students. But sometimes, she wondered, “why are there so few female *Tulkus* compared to male *Tulkus* in Tibetan Buddhist institution?”

She did not accept all Tibetan Buddhist concepts as prescribed. She had huge difficulties in accepting the concept of *Karma*. To her it amounted to self-blame – “whatever is happening to me, it is all due to my own fault”. So she simply accepted particular aspects of the teaching on *Karma* that made sense to her; “be careful what you are thinking and doing because everything has its consequence!”



Picture 16: Is she a Bangladeshi woman? (Sharing the stories of rural women of Bangladesh at a conference, Canberra, Australia, 2010, from Personal Collection)

For a long time, she did not consider herself to be a Bangladeshi woman. It was something that did not seem fit her. She always had a nomadic sense of being in this earth and felt that “she belongs to no specific culture and country”. But the green passport with the seal of Bangladesh has been always with her. Her working experience at grassroots level, representing the country on a number of occasions, especially in international forums, reading feminist literatures on narrative and identity, and Buddhist mind training processes have made her accept the ambivalence of the term “Bangladeshi woman”. It has multiple meanings, and the meanings are relative based on the unique situatedness of a woman. She has realized that she can neither reject the term completely nor accept it with a fixed static meaning.



Picture 17: Pedagogy of freedom (In a class presentation, Perth, 2010, from Personal Collections)

She always wanted to study in a creative way. Her study in the Centre for Human Rights Education of Curtin University turned out to be exciting and joyful. As a student of human rights, she was encouraged to think critically and learn independently. She noticed that most of the Western people in the community had a romanticism about Buddhism that it was a very egalitarian religion. Buddhism's emphasize on non-violence was very famous and used in different secular ideas and practice. Sometimes her practice of critical thinking, and questioning authority and institutions were in conflict with Tibetan Buddhist teaching and practice that would encourage devotion to Guru and Buddha. From her habitual pattern of being suspicious of authority and obedience, she could not connect so easily with the teachings on obedience and devotion to Guru and Buddha in Tibetan Buddhism. She also began to notice a bias towards males in Buddhist texts and institutions. She did not participate in any debate and discussion on this issue in the local Buddhist centre. Whenever this issue would be raised, the argument would sometimes hamper the serenity of the space. She herself was not very keen to initiate it. She had a simple solution – 'I have my class room for these arguments, let's do it there. Let's enjoy the peace in the Buddhist centre'. Everyone in Perth used to talk about Arya Braham, a Theravadan Western Monk and teacher who was

advocating for Buddhist nun's equality in the monastic institutions. He used to give teaching in different places in Perth and had a large number of students from both Western and Asian countries. He was famous, renowned and applauded for his role which shows that how much people in general support nun's equality in the monastic institution and how necessary it is to address this issue. She herself was happy thinking about the possible positive change and appreciated his role.

Although she became aware of the patriarchal aspects of Buddhism, she never felt to leave Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhist practice benefitted her, especially in dealing with negative emotions like jealousy, anger and her sense of superiority. She was developing more compassion, wisdom, openness and harmony.

Although she sincerely followed the instructions from the teachers of the local Buddhist centre, she always retained her personal way of calling the divine. Fortunately, she had enough freedom of choice and agency to apply Buddhist mind training in her own way. As a result, she could separate the spiritual aspects of Tibetan Buddhist practice from the patriarchal aspects of Tibetan Buddhist institutions that were developed at particular times and in different cultures. What would her perspective be if she had been born and brought up in a Buddhist family where her freedom and choice would be curtailed against her wishes with the excuse of religion? How would she connect with Buddhism if she would be a Buddhist nun who faced discrimination in the Buddhist monastery because of her gender?





Picture 18: Two streams of learning meet (Poster Presentation for a leadership conference, June, Perth, 2010, Personal Collection)

She tried to integrate Buddhist concepts into her academic learning on feminism. Buddhist concepts of compassion, meditation practices to control the mind's negative emotions and understanding the nature of reality and self sounded compatible with a feminist quest for woman's freedom and subjectivity. But what about devotion and surrender to the Guru and Buddha? The answer to her questions came at a certain point of life through finding a different meaning of devotion and surrender.



Picture 19: Standing under a tree without leaves in winter (From Personal Collection, July, Perth. 2010)

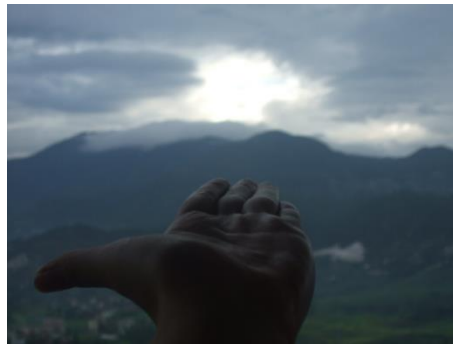
Depression, sadness and sighs never say farewell for good. They are reminders of Buddha's teaching on the impermanence in life! Even after arriving in Australia and enjoying life in the way she wanted, she could not avoid depression and disappointment. When she became sad and disappointed, it became difficult for her to enjoy all the comforts and freedoms in Australia that she had wanted for a long time. She understood more deeply that suffering is not only about the oppression of patriarchy, but also about the twists and the torture of destructive emotions within. She felt that she needed to do serious practice to learn the art of training the mind. At that time, she learned about a retreat in Nepal. Soon she flew off to the retreat in a monastery of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition in Nepal. Now sometimes she wonders, had she not been in Australia at that time, would she be brave enough to travel alone to Nepal for the purpose of a retreat?



Picture 20: "Retreat" up in the hill (Retreat in Nepal, July, 2010, from Personal Collection)

The retreat was led by two Western monks, one was from Australia and another was from Israel. Apart from a few, most of the students were from Western countries. She was the only Bangladeshi. Within a day, she felt a sense of comfortableness with other students. The first few days were full of discussion, question and answers. Some students were a bit critical of the devotional and ritual aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, some were accepting it spontaneously without any question. There were some high Tibetan lamas (termed *Rinpoche*) including reincarnated Tulkus. She went to visit them with other students and offered *Khatas*, a white scarf offered to monks and nuns as a part of respect. When came the time to receive five precepts (abstinence from stealing, killing, lying, sexual misconduct and alcohol) there were lots of questions on the part of the students for the clarification of these precepts for applying day to day life. For example, “does sexual misconduct mean “no sex” even if you are single? Does “no killing” mean one cannot kill parasites during gardening?” The answers were more contextual in nature and sometimes, with no conclusive answer. Interestingly, she did not feel to ask any question. She just wanted to be receptive and took that vow as if she was embracing something beautiful, pious and virtuous. Students were free to take or not to take the precepts, as well as choose which three or four precepts they would like to take. She felt a bit disappointed to see that among forty students, only ten decided to take five precepts as well as other vows. Women were equal to men in this group of serious practitioners. Gradually, all the students in the retreat were guided into the process of silence that included no talk, no phone and no email. The daily practice was full of meditation, prostrations, teaching and chanting. Within a few days, she observed her mind becoming more peaceful. She found herself being more kind, compassionate and understanding of others. She felt a spontaneous sense of devotion to Buddha, Dharma and the spiritual teachers who were guiding this path. She uncovered a new meaning behind spiritual devotion and discipline. To her, devotion,

surrender and discipline did not mean accepting and obeying the order without a choice. In her experience, these practices developed spontaneously within to quiet the chaos of mind; as serene receptivity to the grace of the teaching and Buddhist practice. She began to feel devotion from an innate connection to the Buddhist teaching and practice. This devotion was not based on an obligation. It came from love and a depth of knowing. Perhaps that is why, this devotion or surrender provided the strength to find herself in a new way through prayer and meditation.



Picture 21: Yearning (In the retreat in Nepal, July 2010, personal collection)

At the end of the retreat, she felt highly motivated to do serious practice in the everyday. Some students were also found to think like her. When the retreat ended, some went out to have drinks and celebration which again disappointed her.

The most valuable gift of that retreat for her was having a very special experience. She experienced a contentless, vast, wide and different way of being which was full of joy, serenity and peace. A sense of freedom emerged from this subjectivity; she is beyond body, emotions, and all concepts. This different subjectivity did not wither away her critical thoughts and her political identity as a woman. Rather it made her critical thoughts more nuanced and holistic with a compassionate approach.

*'This body is not me.*

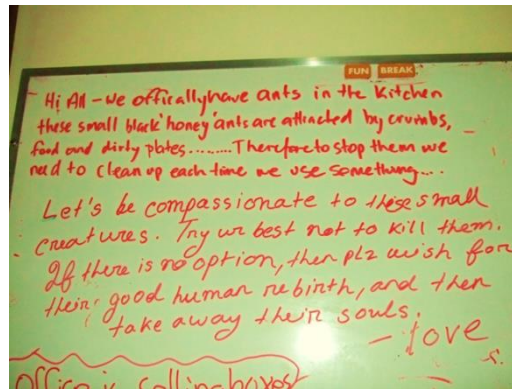
*I am not limited by this body.*

*I am life without boundaries.*

*I have never been born,*

*and I have never died.'*

Thich Nhat Hanh (2002, p. 186)



Picture 22: After returning from the retreat (Her dormitory, Perth, 2010, Personal Collection)

After returning from the retreat in Nepal, her struggle to integrate Buddhist teaching into everyday life began. In the retreat, she had a different schedule and passed most of the time in meditation and prayer. When she was back to Australia, her schedule and priorities changed drastically. The serene mind that she experienced in retreat often disappeared amidst chaos, tensions and stresses of daily life. She tried to hold onto it through allocating as much time as she could to prayer and meditation. It appeared like a play!

Daily Buddhist meditation and prayer made her see how negative emotions of attachment, superiority issues and jealousy were mixed with positive emotions like love and self-worth; just like milk is mixed with water (Courtin, 2013). She experienced a gradual change within herself. She became more aware of the subtle presence of positive and negative emotions in mind. This awareness transformed her thoughts, speech and actions in positive ways. She became more humble, understanding and accommodative.

In terms of the academic world, she started to be aware of the aggressive adversarial way that she used in her writing and speech that created an oppositional way and championed a particular way of thinking (Moulton, 1983). For many years, she was habituated to behave, argue and write in this way. When she started to integrate compassion and Buddhist wisdom in the academic work and day to day life, it was full of trials and error.



Picture 23: Goddess Tara and Dakinis (Nepal, 2010, Personal Collection)

Tibetan Buddhism believes that if a woman can generate yearning for enlightenment and work towards it diligently, she can generate enlightenment faster than man. Women in general, are more receptive, flexible and open due to their connections with feminine embodiment. Tibetan Buddhism values the qualities of the feminine such as receptivity and openness that can break previous patterns of seeing reality in a dualistic way and embrace new ways of being (Hass, 2013; Mackenzie, 1998). As a result, the feminine principle is something that both men and women need to cultivate on their spiritual path. When she read some lines in a prayer, that to be born as man was the best condition for practising dharma, she assured herself that this might be bound to cultural and historical issues. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition the female Buddha *Tara* and *Dakini* gave her a sense of the dignity of woman body and subjectivity.

Initially, she did not understand the meaning of *Dakini* and kept on analysing the concept from a binary conceptual way. Although these conceptualizations and categorizations can be ways to strengthen the intellectual interest in *Dakini*, these ways can limit the openness of the idea of *Dakini* in a spiritual sense (Simmer-Brown, 2002). After reading, meditating on and exploring the

idea of *Dakini* for years, she still feels that *Dakini* is beyond intellectual decidability. No wonder, *Dakini* takes a spiritual seeker beyond the boundaries of intellectual projection and gives the seeker new experiences.



Picture 24: Alone, yet not alone on this arduous path (Yogyakarta, Indonesia, January, 2011, Personal Collection)

When she was in Australia, she never felt that being a woman would be a problem on the spiritual path. Yet she felt the vulnerability and insecurity of having a woman's body when she had to travel alone to attend Buddhist teachings, especially in Asian countries. At some point, she even thought it would be better to be a man so that she could travel easily and stay in a solitary place without fear of being raped! When she read the stories of Buddhist women, their struggles and persistence on the path, she found an immense strength in valuing women's embodiment. The loneliness as well as joy in walking on a different path connected her with these women seekers of the past, present and future.





Picture 25: Awakening her from a lotus in the swampland of mind! (She drew “the feminine” in women’s retreat in Bali, January, 2010, Personal Collection)

Goddess figures from different traditions have always mesmerized her. The mother figure of the divine feminine gives her a sense of innate connection with the divine without judgment, conditions, fear or any expectation; just like a mother nurtures her child and responds to all its demands. Many Buddhist values like openness, receptiveness, tolerance, dialogue, experiencing and integrating can be seen as feminine (Gilbert-Chatalic, 2011). Tibetan Buddhist practice and the divine feminine of that tradition offered her a new way to value the feminine. This way is spiritually elevated through wisdom and compassion, while at the same time being independent, relational and empowered. She began to recognise and appreciate this principle among the people she met, regardless of whether they were men or women. She became a joyful explorer of Goddess figures in every tradition. Goddess figures from all traditions gave her love and respect for women’s embodiment.

She found a huge similarity between the recent trend of feminist scholarship on understanding the feminine principle in texts, discourse, agency and subjectivity and the feminine principle that she

was developing through spiritual practice on the Buddhist path. Born and brought up in a patriarchal culture, she learnt to value only the masculine qualities like competitiveness, dominating nature, assertiveness, competitive attitude, rationality and logic. Feminine qualities like nurturing, openness, relationality and receptiveness were signs of weakness and inferiority to her. By discovering, acknowledging and integrating the feminine, she returned to her feminine nature with a deeper understanding. As part of this new understanding, she learnt how to value her mother and her wisdom. She realized that great feminine wisdom lies in her mother's affectionate way of responding to the needs of everyone and managing differences and conflicts of interest in the family.

According to Maureen Murdock's model of the heroine journey, this is her return trip to the feminine with a redefinition and validation of feminine values (Murdock, 1990, p. 3). This return trip includes an integration of these values with the masculine skills learned during the first half of the journey.

**Only**

**to find you**

**ever renew<sup>30</sup>**

---

<sup>30</sup>The line is taken from Rabindranath's Tagore's famous song 'Only to find you ever renew... I keep losing you time and again, O my precious treasure of love' (Alam, 2014).



Picture 26: Back again to the old clothes in a new way (In the biggest mosque in Dhaka, Bangladesh 2012, Personal Collection)

When she completed the Masters programme, she had to return to Bangladesh. “No further stay” was part of her scholarship in Australia. Both comforts and inconveniences were waiting for her in Bangladesh. The warmth, love and care of her parents gave her solace, but her freedom to have a life of her own was restricted again. She had to negotiate and compromise on many things. She missed going to Buddhist temple, walking alone beside the river, and spending time with like minded people. Again she had to wear *Selwar Kameez* which she did not like to wear. This time, by her own choice, she added extra clothing by covering her head to avoid attention on the road. Interestingly, she found she received respect from both strangers as well as her community for this covering. It facilitated her mobility with more security and confidence. For the first time she

understood the complexities of women's choices and negotiations attached to this issue. Her Buddhist practice helped her to be positive and hopeful in this gloomy phase of her life.



Picture 27: One love religion (Class presentation for Human Rights Activism Unit, Perth, Australia, November 2010, Personal Collection)

Although she could manage to attend retreats and Buddhist teaching in India and Nepal during the time in Bangladesh, the purpose of her travel was neither appreciated nor accepted in the family. Even the immigration officers in the airport of Bangladesh who were supposed to have no right to have extra surveillance on her travelling questioned her for travelling alone to Nepal. It was not considered to be normal for a Bangladeshi girl to travel alone in Nepal. Once she was in a retreat, solitude and the presence of great teachers, she would experience a mind which was tranquil, peaceful, quiet and full of compassion for the world. It would give her a different way of being and a different outlook on the meaning of life. This experience made her extremely persistent to pursue the path, and confident about what she was doing even if her way was discouraged by her family and friends.

During this time, she went to India for a month. Incidentally, she reached a temple where local Buddhist people were in serious retreat, including fasting. Although there was no lack of warmth, love and care from their part, she realized that she could not tell them that she was not born as a Buddhist. Some might be fine with that, but some might not. She longed to go back to the space of the retreat in Nepal or Australia where her identity did not matter at all. She realized her weird in-betweenness more deeply with a sense of grief, disappointment and uncomfortableness.

Besides Buddhism, she also began to explore other religions and the life stories of saints and teachers from different religions. In this phase of life in Bangladesh when she felt vulnerable about her future, she felt an innate connection with the Goddess *Kali* and Lord *Krishna*. She wanted to know about them from the learned teachers in these traditions. But she was afraid to do so in fear of attacking the religious sensitivities of her parents and community. Religious insensitivity was growing at an alarming rate in Bangladesh. It made her more apprehensive about her security. Besides her spiritual path, her choice to remain unmarried was creating sadness and discontent among family, relatives and community. Additionally, the chaos and noise of a densely populated city like Dhaka, its insecurity, and office politics were too much for her to bear. All these issues made her determined to come back to Australia.



Picture 28: A much-sought-after space in Australia (Workstation in the university where she began her Ph.D., March, 2013, Perth, Personal Collection)

After much waiting, struggle, hard work and intense prayer, she returned to Perth in 2013 receiving a scholarship to pursue her Ph.D. studies. She enjoyed studying since it resonated with her spiritual path. She was in a free country. There was no surveillance to monitor where she was going. She took the advantage of this freedom to attend the teachings of various Tibetan Buddhist schools, as well as spiritual teachings from different religious and wisdom traditions including the new aged ones. The spiritual wisdom of different traditions complemented her Buddhist practice and the arduous journey to transform the mind in a non-dogmatic and non-sectarian way. She wanted to know about Mother *Kali* more and kept on reading about her. Years later, she met a female teacher in an Ashram in Perth who introduced her to *Kali* in a deeper way. She also met other wonderful teachers who guided her spiritual path. She realized the value of a human teacher on a spiritual journey and longed to be in their presence more and more.

To her, Goddess *Kali* became an inexpressible divine form which cut through all the dualities to transcend to a higher self (Nikhilananda, 1942). *Lord Krishna*'s features, his stories and his

appearance to the devotee as a friend gave her an intimate feeling about God. God became someone with whom she could connect with emotions, desires and relationship. She found a new sense of freedom and ways of being through this relationship. Through an unspoken connection with Goddess *Kali* and *Lord Krishna*, she reconnected with her innate non-sectarian spiritual path to seek the divine, a divine that is seen and felt through different religious symbols, names and forms at the same time being beyond religion, names, forms and symbols. It is both form and formless, within and beyond the world, both masculine and feminine, at the same time beyond gender and any conceptions. This wisdom made her Buddhist path more deep, non-sectarian and open.



Picture 29: Grief! An unwanted and inevitable part of life (A tree in winter beside her dormitory, Perth, July 2013, Personal Collections)

Even though she managed to come back to Australia, her challenges did not end. She had to deal with a two-headed dragon; internal conflict between giving ample times to spiritual practice everyday and the mundane needs of everyday life. Depression, guilt and loneliness would petrify her from time to time. These emotional ups and downs opened her to knowing Western psychology, especially Jungian psychology and transpersonal psychology.



Life would sometimes become very inconvenient when she became sick and had to do all the cleaning, cooking and grocery shopping. She felt helpless and vulnerable. Due to poor health, sometimes she had to go to the health centre. She came to know about the limitations of the health care system in a new liberal system where specialists, psychotherapy and dental issues were not covered. The financial situation in Australia with budget cuts in academic institutions and increasing rent for campus accommodation influenced her lifestyle, accommodation and even her office space.

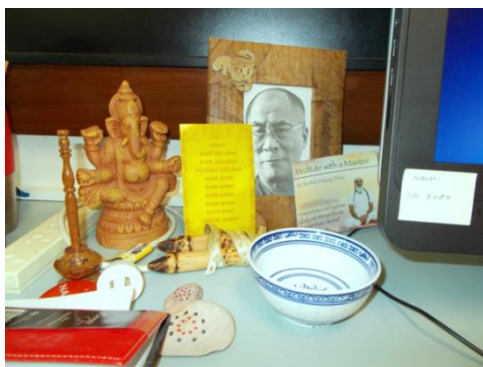
She had never learnt to drive which became an issue in travelling to places for spiritual teaching. Public transport was not convenient and on time in all the places. She began to feel tired of dealing with one challenge after another. She could see the conditioned nature of freedom which appeared utopian to her at the beginning.



Picture 30: How to walk in this illusory world? (Dunsborough, Western Australia, February, 2016, Personal Collections)

To many people, the Buddhist approach to seeing the world as illusion sounds very pessimistic. But to her, it became a space of freedom. The moment she thought something to be her own, it moves away; the moment she thinks someone to be good, that person behaves in an unexpected way; the moment she thought she had conquered anger and desire, the next moment her own behaviour would give her a surprise and shock; and the moment she found life to be hopeless, life turned out to be very positive. The ups and downs in life have deepened her spiritual practice with a sense of renunciation of this world. Her own suffering made her connect with the suffering of all forms of life, and develop compassion for everyone. Buddha's wisdom on emptiness has helped her to adapt to life's ambivalence, contradictions, conflicts and uncertainty.

There is a great emphasis in Tibetan Buddhism on integrating renunciation, *Bodhichitta* (a very high altruistic intention to help sentient beings) and wisdom of emptiness in life. She found there was no general prescription in this regard, except the guidance to keep the mind focused on these aspects through consistent training of mind. From years of experience, she realized when the mind is focused on these intertwined principles, she could control the negative emotions to a greater extent and address life's innumerable challenges in a more skilful way. When mind is focused, devoted, disciplined and aware, this illusory world becomes a place for developing spiritual fulfilment.



Picture 31: An empty cup<sup>31</sup>: Becoming an ordinary student of life again! (Her workstation in 2016, Personal Collections, Perth, March, 2016).

*Self mastery requires that we journey to uncomfortable place, each time we depart our comfort zone (home), we enter into a field of unlimited possibility for growth and redemption, And we keep on repeating the cycle (Arenson, 2016, p. 8-9).*

Indian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions encourage the seeker to have a direct teacher to progress more swiftly. Initially, she was hesitant to accept this idea due to her previous conceptions about Guru-disciple relationships as hierarchical, dominating and authoritative. After finding her teachers, she started to see the Guru-disciple relationship in a new way. Now she agrees with the renowned female Buddhist teacher Tenzing Palmo that a genuine Guru gradually makes the disciple more independent (Palmo, 2011). It is not only that the spoken words of the Guru become the teaching, but also the presence of the teacher and their approach to life work as teaching. The outer Guru invokes the inner Guru within and the wisdom flows from one mind to other in a non-dual way. The Guru-disciple relationship needs not be based on a hierarchy where one is dictating the other on how to practice. It can be based on dialogue, mutual respect and co-operation; just

---

<sup>31</sup> An empty cup is a symbol from Zen Buddhism which indicates receptivity and openness to learning.

like team members or spiritually virtuous mentors or guide or friend. She realized that the presence of great teachers can offer grace and if the mind is receptive, it can embrace that grace. Surrender is a receptivity to that grace which the Guru's words and presence can bestow. When she began to value this special receptivity, she became an ordinary student of life. Her learning emanates from the spiritual part of the life journey to other aspects of life as well.

Although most of her teachers are male, she has met wonderful women teachers. She has observed that these women teachers have a very engaging way to connect Buddhism to both the inner and outer aspects of the world's difficulties. She has also met and made friends with women practitioners from different countries who are not renowned, famous or extraordinary for their Buddhist practice. She has found that there is a wisdom hidden in these ordinary women practitioner's way to deal with the challenges of life. Interestingly, she has begun to feel the presence of life's wisdom among the women who are not Buddhist practitioners including her mother, aunt, friends from all around the world as well as women academics and colleagues. To her, their ways of balancing life with love, care and understanding are also a part of the teaching. In fact she has become open to learning from everyone; both male and female. Being an ordinary student, she finds a harmonious way of connecting to life on this earth and celebrates new form of subjectivity and freedom within herself and in relation to others.

Her indomitable spirit and journey of exploring new ways of being make two stories of heroines merge in one ordinary girl's life in a culturally diffused space; the story of Sumerian Goddess Inanna and Savitri from Indian mythology.

*Inanna 'opened her ear to the great below' and became concerned hearing her sister Ereshkigal's wailing for her dead husband from the underworld (Nicholson, 2008, p.5). In response to the*

*calling, Inanna left the world she knew and began a journey to the unknown underworld alone. In every entrance of the underworld, Inanna had to give up her jewellery and clothes to satisfy the demands of Ereshkigal and her guards. Finally, she reached the bottom of the underworld where Ereshkigal reigned. Ereshkigal, the Goddess of underworld turned Inanna into a corpse. When Inanna did not return, Ninshubur, Inanna's faithful companion asked for help of the God Enki. Enki created two creatures, the Kurgarra and the Galatur who were tiny enough to enter into the underworld and wise enough to please Ereshkigal. Ereshkigal gave them the corpse whereupon they sprinkled the food and water of life, and Inanna got back life (Ward, 1992). Inanna ascended from the underworld to heaven with the gifts and wisdom (Nicholson, 2008). But Inanna's place was required to be replaced by someone for the sake of balance of this universe! Who would be that replacement? The underworld's demon Galla clung to Inanna until she chose the person who would take her place in the underworld. When Inanna found her husband Dumuzi sitting on his throne, dressed in his finest, and seemingly oblivious to her absence, Inanna told Galla to take Dumuzi away.*

*Inanna's journey following the dark Goddess Ereshkigal's wailing is a response to the calling within to find a new way of being. Inanna and Ereshkigal are two sides of the same feminine; one represents the known, the other represents the unknown. A spiritual quest is not only about knowing one's conscious aspects, and allowing one's good sides to flower; but also about discovering the deep unknown, the unconscious within. Knowing one's dark depth might not be very pleasant. It might bring bewilderment and wailing. But as long as we ignore it, it will keep on wailing from the underworld. Only Inanna within us has the courage to respond to that wailing, to meet Ereshkigal, the dark Goddess, and be ready to sacrifice anything at her wish. Inanna died*

*to rise, to heal, to know herself better and to bring answers to life's unresolved issue from the deep within.*

*Like Inanna, "she" was courageous and independent enough to delve into this unknown. The descent into the underworld within is adventurous, frightening and worthy of pursuing. In this descent journey, ego is loosed in every step; pain, unpleasant memories, depression, complaints, grief and suffering become more acute. One realizes the empty and transient nature of all kinds of assumptions, concepts, and prejudices which are akin to Inanna's giving up her clothes and ornaments while she descended and bowed down before the Goddess of darkness. Like the hero/heroine's story of any mythology, Inanna's death and resurrection are symbolic. This death is the death of ego to resurrect as a new way of being. The symbolic death expresses the receptivity to the vastness, love and serenity that spiritual experience offers with a new perspective, a new insight to self, identity and the world. It is a 'loss of old illusions, or old pattern of seeing and being' (Chaplin, 1999, p. 930). The ordinary girl's narrative that you have read reflects this journey; a journey with loneliness, curiosity and independence to find new meaning of her way of being. In this journey, her ego and previous ways of thinking died to resurrect, to experience life and herself in a new way. This new rebirth happens to her again and again; every time she descends into the underworld, dies and resurrects with the reliance and guidance from both outer Gurus, friends and "inner Guru" – the inner wisdom that is developed through long spiritual practice and openness to learn from others.*

*Who is Dumuzi who goes to underworld to replace Inanna's place in this ordinary girl's life? It is the self that rests on ego, animal instincts and habits of ruling; someone who cannot be completely abandoned due to past Karma and mental imprints. Inanna and Dumuzi's relationship and play take place within us through a time without beginning. Their relationship is like the eternal*

*relationship between grace, curiosity, openness and the ego, animal instincts, and the historical Karmic energy that is carried through life after life in the journey of this ordinary girl.*

*Every time a challenge arises in her life, she learns through this challenge to come closer to the divine. She finds an innate connection with the divine through love, prayer and devotion. This connection is beyond literal expressions. Hence, Savitri's story can symbolize her travel on the arduous path of seeking the divine out of love.*

*When Savitri chose Satyavan to marry, all her well wishers and family forbade her to marry. Satyavan was a prince whose father was a king in exile. He lived in the wood with his parents and was destined to die in a year. But Savitri's love was so deep that she was persistent in her choice. She listened to no one except her desire. Her love gave her a new way of being and finding meaning to life which she pursued at any cost. Even if destiny was already written, Savitri did not give up the hope to save Satyavan. Following her inner wisdom, she began to make preparations to face his death. She focused on meditative silence and prayer. As destined, Savitri encountered the Lord of Death who took Satyavan's soul away. Savitri followed the Lord of Death. She was skilled and fearless since she experienced the higher self from travelling within (Aurbindo 1997). No one could stop Savitri from following the Lord of Death through different mystic regions. The Lord of Death and Savitri became engaged in an argument where the Lord of Death gave reasons to take Satyavan's soul with him and Savitri argued for taking Satyavan's soul back to the earth. At the end, seeing the limitless aspects of Savitri's love, the Lord of Death had to surrender before Savitri's courage and capability (Nadkarni, 2012). He bowed down before Savitri's spiritual being and let her take Satyavan back to life. Savitri saved Satyavan and re-wrote the destiny with her indomitable spirit which never stopped pursuing what it believed to be true. Savitri's story is a*

*tale of meetings between human freedom, persistence, choice with divine's grace, blessing and guidance.*

Every time she remembers Savitri's story, she finds immense strength to pursue her spiritual path, cutting through all outer and inner obstacles. She tries to find a similarity between her persistence and Savitri's journey for love. Amidst the continuous struggle of life, she learns to do calligraphy of life's wisdom with a hope.



Picture 32: A Conclusion: Calligraphy of Hope (Her calligraphy with signatures in both English and Bengali, on Chinese New Year, February, Perth, 2016, Personal Collections)



*Led by our karma, we come to this life.*

*Loaded with karma, we depart from this world.*

*In life, so many anxieties, a lot of confusion*

*We simply cannot free ourselves from the perplexities of delusions.*

*Perhaps, in this state of confusion, the Way (Dao) [to spiritual enlightenment] will sprout  
forth<sup>32</sup>.*

*This page intentionally left blank*

---

<sup>32</sup>“The Way, A Spiritual Path” by Kim Hoa Tram (Pang, 2013 online).

*This page intentionally left blank*

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CALLIGRAPHY IN ONE STROKE**

Naomi: Have you noticed how each phase of life began with a performative style of title?

Sharin: Yes, I noticed that titles were not given in a conventional way. It must be a part of performative politics of knowledge!

Naomi: Yes! So that each word of the title makes you think, ponder and reflect on their meaning in performative poetic ways. Through this process, you relieve yourself from the prisons of linear way of thinking and meaning making.

Sharin: Thank you! Enough for me! Now let's get to the point. This is the last chapter and we need to go back to the images and narratives to explore their message and critical insight with conclusionary views. Would you like to say something about the title of this chapter? Or do you want its meaning and purpose to unfold throughout the course of our conversation.

Naomi: You have begun to understand me.

Sharin: I knew it. Let's wait for its unfoldment. Look, I am very disappointed to see the autoethnography and the overall thesis so far. The ideas and narratives go everywhere with no

focus. And where is Tibetan Buddhism here? It is mingled in such a way that it cannot be even separated from other aspects of life, especially feminism.

Naomi: I wanted to challenge the colonality and patriarchy in knowledge production. While doing so, I have chosen particular strategies that challenged the very characteristic of the colonial and phallic order based knowledge, including linearity, a kind of penetrative clarity, and structure. I deliberately keep Tibetan Buddhism as it is in daily life, inseparable from other aspects of life. I wanted to invoke the question that does religion and spirituality work as a strictly demarcated area from other aspects of life? Does it have any essence? Through non-linear narrative, the fluidity of the borders between Tibetan Buddhism and feminism is expressed.

Sharin: Through out the whole thesis, you were not very critical about the concept ‘feminine’. You should be more critical about this term and discuss some critical insights on this concept. Same goes for feminism. It was unclear that which feminist school this thesis is into. Is it poststructuralist? Or postcolonial? Or what?

Naomi: I accept these limitations. Nothing is perfect. I just wanted to defend myself saying that we were weaving many ideas with out bricolaged approach. It makes everything fluid, beyond essential label. There is no static or fixed border. Therefore, this type of limitation will remain.

Sharin: Your oppositional politics ‘going every where with no focus’ fuelled this type of limitation!

Naomi: Does this not reflect feminine embodiment – the rapture, fluidity, multiplicity and unfolding? If you replace a phallic approach with another phallic approach, replace one hegemony with another hegemony, definition with another definition, how can you argue for a non-hegemonic critical consciousness? It is the politics of continuous perspective, the traveling gaze

and “the feminine sublime” dynamism, fluidity, multiplicity, nuances, matrix and interdependence (Stephens, 2013; Zylinska, 2001).

Sharin: I cannot let you be obscure in the name of this politics. Explain to me how all the narratives, titles and images of the autoethnography are working together in addressing the main concerns of this research.

Naomi: We aimed at seeing the relationship between feminism and Buddhism in a new way. In a creative research like this one, titles and texts matter in invoking particular politics of difference in knowledge production (Grierson, 2009). In light of this knowledge, you experience the relationship between Tibetan Buddhism and feminism in a new way.

Sharin: Let’s get to the point. Let’s start with the first image in the autoethnography. The title of that image was ‘When she was just an ordinary student of life’. After that, different images including the surreal arts kept coming in different phases of life. At the end there came the same theme of the first image in a different way: ‘An empty cup: Becoming an ordinary student of life again!’ You have already talked about this in the previous chapter. Could you clarify this further?

Naomi: We have talked about feminist Buddhist subjectivity. Can you remember its characteristics?

Sharin: Oh yes, there is interdependence, egolessness, fluidity, multiplicity as well as critical consciousness.

Naomi: At the same time, there is groundedness, centeredness and mindfulness. All these aspects have performative aspects. A cultivation of this subjectivity requires constant learning, a new way of thinking, seeing and interpreting with curiosity, openness and acceptance (Stephens, 2013). The

word “student” is a wonderful living metaphor to behold the nature of this transformative subjectivity. Just see how the meaning of “student” invokes multiplicity and fluidity through the use of different life events and pictures! Therein lies the art of semiotics where the relationship between signifier and signified loses its phallic fixedness.

Sharin: I think the student metaphor invokes “egoless” aspects of subjectivity that we have already talked about in the chapter “Feminism and Tibetan Buddhism in an in-between space”. Although Western psychology is apprehensive about the idea of egolessness, Buddhism does not understand it as abandoning individuality and uniqueness (Epstein, 1988; Gross, 1993 a). In Buddhism, egolessness refers to a particular wisdom of awareness on how we strive for supremacy, mastery, essence, control and dominance over reality and others and suffer when the reality and others do not response to our desire (Epstein, 1988; Klein 1995). However, one needs to consider that desire for mastery and dominance, and desire for being valued and connected are two different things. In terms of the ego, we are referring to the first idea, not the latter one. This awareness is crucial in challenging patriarchal control and dominance, which is not only external but also internal.

Naomi: Well done! Yes, egolessness embeds us in a participatory non-hierarchical universe where we all reciprocate, grow and learn as part of the whole. We become interrelated and interconnected through openness, love and wisdom. There is circularity in terms of the use of the student metaphor. It encompasses the whole life journey with the value of the feminine, the circular perspective which is inclusive, encompassing, relational and connected, and believes in sharing power (Murdock, 1990, p. 173).

Sharin: This picture ‘an empty cup: Becoming an ordinary student of life again’ is also about the religious and spiritual practice that ‘she’ has chosen through her agency and choice while

interacting with this world. Her spirituality does not fully resemble any particular religion, at the same time, it is very inclusive of other religions.

Naomi: There are lots of discussions on heterogeneous aspects and personalized meaning of Buddhism in chapter two. I would like the readers to become active, reflective and link the discussion in chapter two with the story that they have read until now. That is how we can make the readers co-participants in making knowledge.

Sharin: I know you want the readers to notice her Buddhism's in-betweenness in an open ended space. There is no conclusion; only thought after thought weaving in an indefinite direction.

Naomi: I see you have improved. Through our conversation, gradually you have learned to value the poetic, creative and emphatic aspects of knowledge. You are decolonising yourself.

Sharin: I have seen that you have included surreal arts depicting Western girls in the autoethnography. Do they symbolize your fascination with the West? I thought you wanted to create an ambivalent relation with the West challenging the colonial tendency that places the coloniser and the colonized in essential, fixed and static relationships.

Naomi: Autoethnography can strengthen reflexivity and introspectiveness in a therapeutic and transformative way when it becomes a creative process, an artistic tool to discover the inner mindscapes especially with regard to the complexities, vulnerability and empathy in relation to family, society and culture (Custer, 2014). When I began to write the biographical part of this thesis, I found words were not enough to communicate my feelings. There is always something more which is beyond the texts. I was deeply unsatisfied. Then one day, I saw a surreal picture. It

spoke of a phase of my life in a profound way; a way that valued ambivalence, paradoxes and complexity in understanding myself.

Sharin: But what does this art mean?

Naomi: Like a postmodern metaphor, this art cannot be reduced to a concept that specifies a single meaning (Olson, 2013). Nevertheless, this art is not completely without clues. A sequence is followed through titles and narratives. One needs to read and look at the art and narrative in a way that simultaneously focuses on the whole as well as the parts. This is how a continuous, traveling perspective unfolds. In this perspective, one's focus is not on a single point; rather it dissipates into both the place of travel, the point of departure, and the point of arrival. It becomes a movement or flow rather than a static point giving rise to a spontaneous pondering of the meaning with multiple possibilities, a force to invoke streams of imaginations among the readers.

This deliberate creative political intervention is sometimes necessary to remind us of the performative aspect, the feminine way of knowing (intuitive, accommodative and circular), as well as a postmodern and a poststructuralist approach to producing knowledge. The texts along with the images create a mutual non-hierarchical relation and flow with indecidability, inclusiveness and incompleteness, and the ideas love to challenge the priority of texts over images (Crews, 1999; Linda, 1992; Watson, 2009).

Sharin: But you are within an academic framework. Yes, you have taken a fictocritical approach which permits you to make creative experimental interventions. But certainly, there is a limit!

Naomi: Do not forget, the story emphasises feminine ways of knowing; the knowing and learning that is common to women. It is sometimes called the language of the feminine psyche. The



feminine mode of producing knowledge is receptive, pregnant with multilayered meanings, spontaneously interactive, engaging, heart-centred rather than the head-centred, emotional and passionate, personalized and intuitive, blurring the borders of subject and object (Belenky et al., 1986; Hall, 1980). This knowledge is considered to be more primitive than an objective way of knowing (Belenky et al., 1986). The connection between the picture used in every phase of this life writing and the story that accompanies the picture is ingrained in the feminine mode of knowing and producing knowledge. Do not think I have completely disregarded the masculine model. You will see there is a sequence in the way images, titles and narratives are used. Linearity, structure and focus do not disappear in this work. You cannot judge the autoethnography as clueless, crazy and wild.

Sharin: Yes, I agree that this way is not completely without foundation. But my thought patterns are getting jammed. It radically challenges the way I used to think.

Naomi: If you are saying that your thoughts are jammed, that is a sign of progress. Perhaps you are not aware of Irigaray's vision of jamming the theoretical machinery through disruption, a new feminine language (Bartlett, 2016; Irigaray, 1985). Alas! something is wrong, said the patriarchal masculine voice!

One of the characteristics of the "feminine sublime" is its spaciousness to hold the polarities, contradictions and oppositions without reducing it to monolithic descriptions (Zylinska, 1993). The surreal arts along with other images create multiplicity, wonder and ambivalence in the interpretation of reality and representation in this thesis. It brings a strangeness and complexity, and makes us value 'the presence of multiple causations and the possibility of different vantage points to view a phenomena' (Rose and Kincheloe, 2004, p.95). Given this spaciousness, the

Western style of linearity in thinking and representation lose its supremacy (Rose and Kincheloe, 2004, p. 95).

Sharin: Yes, it creates destabilization and a mystic feeling. I think the use of the surreal arts depicting the Western girl (Pictures titled ‘Where does this girl come from?’<sup>33</sup>, ‘She was always there with hope and sigh’<sup>34</sup>, ‘A seeker’<sup>35</sup>) is a part of politics of in-betweenness of East and West. The images titled ‘A third space within a third space’<sup>36</sup>, ‘Am I Bangladeshi woman?’<sup>37</sup>, ‘Sea and hills, beyond the borders sketched by others’<sup>38</sup>, ‘Open space’<sup>39</sup>, ‘Pedagogy of freedom’<sup>40</sup> sustain and fuel the disruptions of in-betweenness. These pictures create dilemmas in terms of a woman’s belongingness and affinity with a particular culture. I am particularly drawn to the picture “Back again to the old clothes in a new way”<sup>41</sup>. This image complicates the question of resistance, compromise and negotiation with the culture in an undecidable way. Through bodily gestures and poses, these images performatively unsettle the way ‘others’ are stereotyped in the colonial paradigm (Gilbert, 1998). In this regard, I could see that Trinh-T Minh-ha’s strategy of interdependency of at least four simultaneous gestures are taking place: reminding us that “I am like you” while emphasizing one's difference; and insisting “I am different” while making all definitions and practices of otherness fluid, inconclusive and undecidable (Trinh-T, 1991; Trinh-T, 1998). They are the “gestures” because they dwell on semiotics where meaning assumes poetic style and the relationship between signifier and signified become fluid and multilayered.

---

<sup>33</sup> Picture.2

<sup>34</sup> Picture 5.

<sup>35</sup> Picture 6.

<sup>36</sup> Picture 3.

<sup>37</sup> Picture 16.

<sup>38</sup> Picture 11.

<sup>39</sup> Picture 14.

<sup>40</sup> Picture 17.

<sup>41</sup> Picture 26.

Naomi: The pictures keep changing, with new poses and titles, as a constant reminder of transience, fluidity and contingency in life. That's how the Buddhist view of no-self and postmodern and poststructuralist views of the fluid, contingent and unstable self manifests. In Buddhism, reality is seen from the viewpoint of emptiness where everything originates from interdependence. There is no essence or fixed entity. Similarly, there is no fixed reality and self for the girl in the autoethnography. This aligns with Lyotard's postmodern condition (1984) which instigates a crisis of representation through challenging Modernist approach to representation/reality dialectics.

Sharin: According to Langellier (1999), there is no pre-existing given self and agency that exist before the performance. Self and agency come into existence through performance. In the language of Buddhism, there is no pre-given essence, self and agency; they come into existence through the play of immeasurable causes and conditions. We have talked earlier about a feminist Buddhist subjectivity that is both constructed, while at the same time beyond construction. I think the photographs are working on the constructed aspect of subjectivity in a performative way. Performance in this context has become both a form of investigation and a form of representation (Holm, 2008).

Naomi: I like the way Leavy (2008) has seen the performance. From this approach, performance is not to be read, but rather, to be experienced. In this experience, multiple meanings become opened and a range of emotional, psychological as well as intellectual responses are invoked. Neither the author nor the readers control the meaning completely. As a result, knowledge flows from co-construction. In this intersubjectivity, dynamic and fluid experiences are shared simultaneously by the readers and researchers (Noy, 2004). This works as an antidote against the writing embedded in conventional Western Cartesian subjectivity which creates a hierarchical relationship with the readers on the basis of mastery and control (Yagelski, 2011).

Have you noticed the images where she assumed different poses with various types of clothing – in a black coat in Japan, in traditional attire in a boat, in *Shari* in both Bangladesh and Australia, in Western clothes and with extended hands near hills and sea of Bangladesh and Australia, in a meditative pose near Borobudur, and in *Selwar Kameez* near the mosque? Altogether they become performance; as a continuous flow of experience invoking emotional and intellectual responses on the part of the readers to explore an embodied subjectivity lived through the different courses of life, across history, time, and place.

Sharin: The meditative pose near Borobudur reminded me of the discussion in chapter two on the centrality of meditative experience in Buddhism as a Western imagination (Sharf, 1993, 1995, 1998). I wonder whether ‘she’ would select the meditative part of Buddhism if she would be born as Buddhist somewhere in India or Tibet!

Naomi: That would be a very orientalist assumption that she was focused on meditative aspects of Buddhism due to her Western orientation. Do not forget Gyatso’s (1999) argument that meditation was emphasized in Buddhism before the West had discovered Buddhism. Do consider that she was also interested in rituals and the devotional aspects of Tibetan Buddhism. Her pictures on rituals and meditations were very contemplative and blurred the boundaries of rituals and meditative experience. Previously we read that there is a demarcated line between meditation and ritual elements of religion in the Western paradigm. Her story is disruptive to this type of demarcation and categorization.

Sharin: I think we need to discuss it more. This is a bit confusing!

Naomi: I need to remind you that “Modern Buddhism” is one of the areas where this thesis touches. We are more interested in the methodology that can unpack the interaction between Tibetan

Buddhism and feminism in a non-Western woman's life and creating a space for narrative in a non-Western voice. It is more about how you dance, sing, or art; the process itself going beyond the prescribed rules and limits.

Sharin: Alright! There are also lots of other objects in the pictures that caught my attention. For example, the mosque and the poor people in Bangladesh (Picture 26: Back again to the old clothes in a new way) and the Australian Indigenous symbols like sticks and stones (Picture 13: Welcome to Australia).

Naomi: Please do not use prescriptive ways to analyse these images. Prescriptive analysis attempts to translate the visual knowledge exactly into written and verbal understanding which can block the creative potential of the images in invoking agency on the part of the readers to relate to the experience (Pink, 2005). There are ways other than prescriptive ones for understanding these images.

In this thesis, feminist Buddhist subjectivity is situated in a particular place, history and time, while at the same time being beyond these constructs. Her story talks about historical events, politics, financial crises, geographies, cultures, and globalization. Her agency in dealing with Tibetan Buddhism resembles Mahmood's (2005) argument for embracing and innovating aspects of women's agency in postcolonial contexts. Her playful approach to Tibetan Buddhism breaks the Western dualistic binary between "subordination and subversion" (Droogers, 1999; Mahmood, 2005). This approach expresses an innovative capacity to connect dissimilar elements of religion through reimagination and negotiation (Droogers, 1999; Mahmood, 2005).

The images speak of an embodied subjectivity in an intimate way. This speaking generates open-ended ideas. Images of the Indigenous sticks (Picture 13: Welcome to Australia!), objects of rituals

that she would love to keep (Picture 15: Part of her being), scones (Picture 22: After returning from the retreat), and Borobudur temple of Indonesia (Picture 24: Alone, yet not alone on this arduous path) speak of the interaction between Buddhism and feminism that take place in day to day life, in the blurred realms of the personal and the political. Their interaction shows how so many issues can be related to women's life journey depending on place, time, relations and context. When you keep on looking at the images one after another, so many ideas emerge in one instance: ritual objects relating to Tibetan Buddhism and her personal connection and invention, "scones" from the European culture; "Indigenous sticks" representing Aboriginal spirituality; "Borobudur" reminiscent of the ancient history of Buddhism; "a Chinese cup" symbolizing Chinese wisdom (Picture 31: An empty cup : Becoming an ordinary student of life again!); people around the mosque in Bangladesh that link to poverty and religious issues in Bangladesh etc. If you look at the pictures with an open-ended mind, reductive thinking stops and multiplicity begins to weave. Together these photographs disappoint the notion of a single interpretation, a one dimensional linear view and reductive understanding of reality (Holm, 2008).

Sharin: In chapter 3, we found that the subjectivity of Tibetan woman valued emotions relational aspects of agency and interdependency. I have noticed the same attributes in her subjectivity.

Naomi: This is not only about Tibetan woman. I have observed these features in the narratives of Western women too.

Sharin : Is it something universal? I get confused by your voice. I know you only intend to give birth streams of thoughts. I now skip it leaving inconclusive and another point for pondering for

the readers. I have noticed that the pictures gradually become personless in the autoethnography. Is there significance to this disappearance?

Naomi: Personless pictures are here and there in the autoethnography. Yes, at a certain point, the absence of person becomes noticeable. This purposeful disappearance is related to the Buddhist feminist subjectivity that we explained in our discussion on theories in one of the previous chapters. Our being is not confined to the physical body. We have a body while at the same time are beyond the body. Our subjectivity is constituted through the non-duality of mind-body as well as non-duality of outer and inner worlds. Body and mind remain intertwined in a nondual way. There were images in the autoethnography where her body was absent. She was not in the picture. Yet the images were related to her. I wanted to invoke two questions in this regard: Where is she in that picture? Aren't these pictures related to her? Please relate to these questions the way you relate to a poem. Do not just reject it. This performative questioning makes us think and rethink a Buddhist feminist subjectivity in relation to corporeality and transpersonal experience. It becomes a process of undoing of previous patterns. We slowly learn to embrace new way of thinking.

Sharin: This reminds me of Collin's (1982) Buddhist subjectivity on the basis of continuity without an essence. Every time you raise something new. I think you wanted to bring out the Buddhist approach of no-self through the gradual disappearance of her body in the images. This disappearance is quite symbolic. Of course I understand that you did not mean to tarnish the body's value. You wanted to position it as one of the parts of her subjectivity. It is too prolific and open-ended.

Now let's talk about the space. We have talked earlier about how subjectivity is interconnected with space. Space is the stage on which our subjectivity performs through actions, thoughts and movements (Da-Wei, 1981)

Every art form including a photo creates a space of consciousness, an intuitive human activity where perceptions like seeing and feeling play a role in the way we give meaning to space (Da-Wei, 1981). The same approach applies to the narrative which is always within a spatial imagination (Ryan, 2014).

Just to refresh our memory. We have talked about Lefebvre's three spaces: the physical space that we perceive sensually and materially, the mental space that is the result of ideas, emotions and thoughts, and the social space where we are embedded in societal relations (Lefebvre, 1991; Schreiner, 2016). In the autoethnography, we find a convergence of these three spaces. Non-duality of different spaces is sketched through visual images and surreal art, their titles, and the use of the story of archetypal figures. For example, the image titled 'A much-sought-after space' shows the convergence of all three spaces, the physical, mental and social. This image makes you think about her return to Australia and wonder what her life was like in a world where external and internal realities were blurred. It creates multiple narratives. One ceases to search for a singular linear narrative from this image.

This convergence of spaces proliferates in the blending of sacred and profane spaces. We wanted to explore a spirituality that is not separate from our day to day life. In the images, we find spiritual symbols like rivers, a Buddhist stupa (Architecture), extended hands towards the sky, mountain, mosque as well as material symbols like glamour, body gestures, clothing and so on. The fixed boundary between the sacred and profane collapses in these pictures. Part of this blurring is the



merge of ephemerality and corporeality, the external and internal world. For example, ‘How to walk in this illusory world (Picture 30)’ reminds us of the ephemeral nature of life through impermanent footprints in the sand. The images ‘Grief’ (Picture 29), ‘An empty cup: Becoming a student again (Picture 31)’ show the blurred relationship between external and internal worlds through introspection, sadness and curiosity. Then there is the last picture on Chinese Calligraphy (Picture 32: A Conclusion: Calligraphy of Hope) which expresses spatial imagination in relation to both finite and infinite dimension of human life.

Naomi: I would like to mention that this merging of ephemerality and corporeality, internal and external phenomena is deeply related to the Buddhist way of seeing reality as “illusion”. From this perspective, the reality is without any essence. But its unfolding has meaning and creative potentials. Reality manifests with a creative elasticity where corporeality and ephemerality, finite and infinite, internal and external can play together.

Sharin: The image of Chinese calligraphy as the last image caught my attention. I want to talk about it a little more. I have a sense that since it is related to our conclusion, we can discuss this topic after we explain the ideas related to space more in terms of narrative.

You mentioned that there is also a convergence of spaces through archetypal characters and their stories in the narrative. Would you like to explain space in relation to the narrative?

Naomi: We have already discussed that the “travel” metaphor can make the spatial imagination of the narrative multidimensional (Mikkonen, 2007). It transforms the subject’s relationship to space. When you connect Alice, Savitri, or Inanna’s journey with “her” journey in this mundane world, the borders between the imaginary and real, mental and physical, sacred and profane become fluid. The stories also create a non-dichotomous relationship between Eastern and Western spaces. We

can see how a Western story like “Alice in Wonderland”, an Eastern story like “Savitri”, a Sumerian story “Inanna”, and the hero/heroine’s journey can resonate with an individual woman’s journey. Through these stories, the categories of culture, place and time become non-dual in an in-between space. In this fluid space, the sacred and the profane, and the imaginary and the real become non-oppositional and non-binary, and merge in a paradoxical way. This non-duality strikes at the very core of patriarchy and coloniality, the foundation of which is singularity, binary, essence, objectivity and fixed boundaries.

Sharin: Although the archetypal stories are embedded in a feminist paradigm, the spiritual significance of the stories is profound. For example, the universal pattern of the hero/heroine’s journey reminds me of the universality of spiritual experiences. It is a way of connecting to the whole of humanity on the basis of both individuality and commonness which is the important idea of perennial philosophy.

Alice’s trip to Wonderland, Inanna’s travel to the underworld and meeting with dark Goddesses Ereshkigal, and Savitri’s determined journey reflect a woman’s spiritual quest and the value of her inner voice and wisdom. This journey is full of challenges and uncertainty as well as hope, joy and contentment.

Naomi: I can’t believe you are explaining the stories! I am feeling the echoes of my voice in you.

Sharin: So do I. I am highly pleased to see your changes. This leads to my change as well. Now let’s return to the image of Chinese calligraphy. Can you please explain the idea behind the use of Chinese calligraphy as the last image of the autoethnography?

Naomi: Thanks for this question. In explaining this complex idea, I am taking assistance from Kun Li (2015) and Kwo Da-Wei's (1981) approaches. Chinese calligraphy is considered to be an artistic expression. Space in traditional Chinese paintings is different. Chinese paintings invoke a space where multiple perspectives and gaps are deliberately highlighted to explore the intertwined relationship between form and the formless, the seen and unseen, the known and unknown, the vivid and the blank.

Sharin: So the Chinese painting brings the Buddhist notion of emptiness that is elaborated in the chapter on Tibetan Buddhism, and our conversation on theories.

Naomi: Yes, it is the play of form and formlessness and the birth of creation from the void. The Chinese painting reminds us of the productivity of the void, the openness that makes changes possible in reality.

Both Kun Li (2015) and Kwo Da-Wei (1981) propose that Chinese calligraphy represents the space of dance or movement which is the result of the meeting between quietude stillness, flow and fluidity. Since the meaning of calligraphy is not literal, it can create a space within and beyond the page simultaneously. The meaning of a Chinese character is performative with beauty, vibrancy and emotion as well as an inference to the phenomena in a contemplative way. It does not completely describe physical things, neither is it completely abstract. When someone does calligraphy, one is tempted to linger and ponder in the space in a very productive way. This lingering and pondering reveal depth, imaginations and expression. There is no final plausibility that is generally found in the composition of English words. The composition of Chinese characters maintains a harmony, unity, and rhythm between finitude and infinitude, imagination and the real, proximity and distance, appearance and disappearance, stillness and flow. In short, calligraphy

with its depth and flow expresses her endless journey in the blurred boundaries between the spiritual and material world, sacred and profane spaces. By the way, did you notice that in the image of the Chinese calligraphy, her signature was in both English and Bengali, and there were calligraphies done by others?

Sharin: Is it related to heterogeneity and the relational nature of third space?

Naomi: Yes. Her subjectivity in a third space is not isolated or separated from the world. This third space travels and unfolds through day, time, context and relations of life.

Sharin: Calligraphy invokes dynamism of space. This dynamism is also found in the other images through the strategy of “map” and “tour” (Linde & Labov, 1975).

Naomi: I think we have talked about this issue already.

Sharin: Yes, I know. I want to refresh the memory. According to these strategies, the “map” represents the space from the panoramic perspective of an observer situated on an elevated point, and the “tour” implies something that we are going through. In this thesis, “tour” symbolizes the constructed aspect of a feminist Buddhist subjectivity and “map” symbolizes the subjectivity that is beyond this constructed aspect. Remember, there was an image in the autoethnography titled ‘The retreat up in the hill (Picture: 20)’. It clearly shows the “map” strategy. The other images are from the “tour” strategy. Together they represent two aspects of a Buddhist feminist subjectivity: “constructed” and “unconstructed” – beyond construction.

Naomi: I like the way you used “beyond construction” to show what we mean by “unconstructed”. I was worried about the term ‘unconstructed’. This term may create more confusion, since

Modernist approaches also use the aspects of “unconstructed” in the sense of a pre-given and static essence.

Sharin: The unconstructed aspect of a feminist Buddhist subjectivity is transpersonal in nature, denoting a capacity to witness the contents of mind, an experience of oneness, wholeness, infinity, and unconditional compassion. Since we have this clarification, the term “unconstructed” should not be confusing. The “map” strategy mainly speaks of the witnessing capacity of the mind to view its own contents. It is a part of Buddhist subjectivity which is related to mindfulness.

Naomi: I do not agree that our images reflect “tour” and “map” strategy in separate ways. The narratives, archetypes, images, and titles together address the blending of these two strategies, just like the way the constructed and unconstructed (or beyond constructed) aspects remain intertwined within a spiritual subjectivity. There is an awareness detached from the contents, at the same time connected to the contents themselves. The awareness is invoked through an observing self, a distance from the contents one is experiencing, a kind of witnessing which came through writing as “she” in the autoethnography. This awareness allows a kind of detached view of experiences on the basis of conditionality and contingency. At the same time, the contents make the experience very raw, real and vivid. One becomes aware of the contents of mind, at the same time one is not overwhelmed by the contents. Both happen simultaneously. Feminist subjectivity joins with Buddhist subjectivity at the junction of the meeting between awareness and contents. That’s how “tour” and “map” strategy are blended to represent feminist Buddhist subjectivity based on mindfulness.

The relationship between constructed and unconstructed (beyond constructed) is something that needs to be experienced through pondering and lingering over the images, texts and titles. Through

this pondering, we experience a space which is both productive and becoming. This is the space of her life where feminism and Tibetan Buddhism interact and perform. Chinese calligraphy invokes a space of lingering, pondering and an openness to contemplate the dynamism invoked through different strategies in this thesis.

A human being's life story is an unfinished phenomenon. The image of calligraphy, along with the titles and poems are her ways of expressing the last words for the sake of the moments. But her story did not end.

Sharin: I agree that her conclusion brings more wonder rather than suspension. The meaning behind the title of this chapter is gradually unfolding. But I am still confused regarding the title in terms of relating calligraphy to "one stroke".

Naomi: In calligraphy each stroke holds a deep meaning. In a single calligraphy, there is the entrance, under turn, overturn, ascend, descend and a variety of pressure. The whole process is performative. I first heard about "Calligraphy in One Stroke" from the calligraphy of the Buddhist monk, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun (Lee et al., 2012; Morales, 2012). Due to illness, he almost lost his eyesight. As a result, when he used to do calligraphy, he had to do it from top to bottom, left to right, without a pause. It was extremely skilful. Any pause or break would not let him connect with the character due to his poor eyesight. In this meditative manoeuvre, he completely relied on heart, intuition, awareness and inner stillness.

From inner stillness, there arises an unbroken continuity of movement. Stillness and flows become intertwined, which is part of a mindfulness subjectivity that a seeker cultivates through spiritual and creative practice (Taylor, 2016).

Sharin: This sounds like another way of understanding the relationship between constructed and unconstructed aspects of the subjectivity that we were talking about. Constructed aspect can be seen as the flow and the unconstructed one can be the stillness, beyond conception.

Naomi: You are correct! To me, calligraphy in one stroke reflects the mindfulness where stillness and flow become interrelated and create a harmonious expression that a seeker strives for. This chapter is all about understanding this expression in the context of the interaction between feminism and Buddhism in an in-between space. I think we should end it here.

Sharin: I think we should not conclude without discussing some issues in further depth. For example, the idea of an in-between space is like the feminine and freedom.

Naomi: I had planned to leave these to the reader's imagination. If you keep on clarifying everything, where is space for the readers to ponder possibilities?

Sharin: I told you repeatedly that this is not poetry, neither an art. So let's focus on some issues that need further clarification.

I want to discuss how feminism and Tibetan Buddhism became interrelated in her life journey. They merge in such an ambivalent way that confusion about their separate existence become inevitable.

Naomi: It does mean this inseparability is pre-given. It is something interdependent, relative and performative. Their relationship assumes a messy form, where the individual exteriority drifts and floats in the currents of life. It sometimes becomes visible, sometimes not. You cannot come to a conclusion in this regard, but you know what it looks like. Their interaction happens in an in-between space, between East and West, yes or no, between appearance and disappearance, between difference and similarity.

Sharin: So this in-between space is multivalent and dynamic! There are not only complementing features of opposite streams in this space, but also contradictions. We have seen that she did not connect with certain cultural norms and traditional clothing. At the same time, she seems to make a connection with her culture through the literature, folk song, and wearing *Shari* at international conferences. The way she mingles the sacred and profane through desire and relationship reflects the characteristic of the Bengali literature during British period when European ideas of liberty, dignity and individuality were assimilated with devotion, surrender and love of God. This ambivalence deepens the dynamism of the third space and crisis of representation (Bhaba, 1994).

I noticed that her in-between space is also about other religions and spiritual practices. She explored different religious and spiritual practices including Hinduism and new age spirituality. Although Buddhism and Hinduism have many commonalities, they contradict each other concerning the existence of supreme God. There is no concept of supreme or absolute God in Buddhism, whereas Hinduism cherishes the concept of supreme God. But she had a personal way of dealing with this issue and did not experience any conflict.

In this regard, her approach reflects the approach of perennial philosophy which is interested in the non-contradictory aspects of spiritual experiences from different religious practices (Wilber 1998 a, 1998, b).

Naomi: We need to be a bit careful. We cannot enforce the sameness of religion in the name of same spiritual experiences or their complementary function. We have seen that she is not very inclined to explore her parent's religion, the one with which she was brought up. If she is enforced with the excuse that her parent's religion would give her the same experience like the one she gets from Buddhism and Hinduism, what would happen?



Sharin: The relationship among universality of spiritual experience, diversity of religions and an individual's choice are highly complex. Thanks for pointing this out. Now I would like to talk about the way she experienced the feminine in her life journey.

Naomi: We have already talked about the feminine so many times!

Sharin: Yes, but now it is time to relate this concept to the autoethnography. It cannot be denied that the word feminine sounds like it is oppositional to masculine and invokes a concern about essentiality and binary. I have to admit that this feminine is both a problematic and powerful medium to express a particular subjectivity that has been reclaimed and rebuild from the works of postmodern and poststructuralist feminists. We have seen that a pattern appeared in her life in terms of relating to the feminine: a paradoxical relationship with the feminine at the initial stage, the realization of its value and knowing it during the journey, and at the end, acknowledging and integrating the feminine in her life. The last stage is seen as "the return" (Murdock, 1990). At the beginning of her journey, we saw that she was drawn to Goddess figures, yet she did not value her mother. She was in a patriarchal culture where the masculine model or father figure is always placed at the top of the hierarchy and feminine embodiment is not valued. Buddhist contemplative practice has helped her to embrace the feminine through intuitive ways of knowing, acceptance and valuing the motherhood principle on multiple levels.

Jungian Psychologist Hall (1988, p. 101) explains the motherhood principle:

The mother attitude watches and dreams and admits all sides of a thing to view without judging or discriminating according to sets of abstract principles. It sees things patiently and paradoxically. It is an inclusive attitude that always takes into account. This nature has its drawbacks, that one can perceive so many sides of an issue the freedom ends up in muddle. But this attitude is based on intrauterine like interdependence.

In Tibetan Buddhism, the motherhood principle is used as a symbol to generate the highest compassion for all sentient beings. The Motherhood principle makes one's heart more compassionate and kind, something that Buddhist practice aims for (Allione, 1984; Hass, 2013). In the autoethnography we found that her connection with the motherhood principle has been reclaimed through her evolved relationship with her biological mother, and the divine feminine figure (the Goddess).

Naomi: It does not mean the feminine has replaced the masculine. The value of the feminine provides a balance to the masculine and feminine energy within us and our relationship to reality (Deida, 2006). We saw that she worshipped all forms of divine, both masculine and feminine. In this regard, I need to mention that although we are talking about feminine and masculine, these are not essential categories. If you come to the spiritual paradigms of both Tibetan Buddhism and Hinduism, feminine and masculine are found to be in a complementary relationship playing as a polarity and at some point merging to the 'innermost centre' going beyond conflict and categorization (Campbell, 2004; Franz, 1995, p. 325; Murdock, 1990).

Sharin: In her story, we found an effort to find a harmonious balance between feminine energy represented by movement, connection, light, love, grace, touch, pleasure, surrender, spiral ways of thinking, nurturance, mystery, communion, intuition, creativity, love, and feelings, and masculine aspects, such as meditation, solitude, asceticism, courage and adventure, discipline, direction, focus, possession, detachment, and rationality (Deida, 2006; Solluna, 2016). An example of this relation is the way she seeks spiritual meaning to life through both meditation, courage, adventure,

discipline and detachment, as well as intuition, creativity, love, feelings, surrender, mystery and continues engagement with the flow of life.

Naomi: Your gaze has expanded!

Sharin: Thank you. We can see that in striving for balance, both feminism and Tibetan Buddhism have become active, present and mutually reciprocative. Feminist aspirations include having an independent career as well as choice and agency in pursuing the personal goals gave her the confidence to walk on the Buddhist path, while Buddhist contemplative practice made her appreciate the feminine traits. The feminine aspect of her subjectivity is receptive and open, yet independent with relational autonomy.

I also realized we should talk about how she experienced freedom in an in-between space. Although “freedom” is not our main concern, it is related to a feminist Buddhist subjectivity. The freedom that she pursued is neither completely feminist, not absolutely Buddhist or spiritual, yet in some sense, it is both.

Naomi: In her story, she brings forward a notion of freedom which is both contingent and conditional while at the same time beyond conceptual limitations. In a spiritual area, be it in Tibetan Buddhism, Hinduism, or transpersonal psychology, freedom is used to denote spiritual freedom from all negative emotions which is in tune with the enlightened nature within, and a union with the divine (Wilber, 2006). Spiritual freedom is something that cannot be invented; it is always there as a primordial nature. This freedom is vast and limitless. In that sense, you can say it is pre-given and hence, contradicts postmodern contention. However, Tibetan Buddhism would never reduce this pre-given phenomenon to “essence” in a Modern Western sense. Through spiritual freedom, one goes beyond all corporeality, concepts and contingency, at the same time accepts one’s limited positionality, vulnerability, interdependency and agency in this participatory

interdependent universe. When it comes to interaction with corporeal reality, even the spiritual freedom appears limited, partial and conditional. In that sense, even Buddhist freedom contains aspects that are similar to postmodern and postcolonial approaches to human freedom: conditional, contingent, fluid and relative in meaning, varied in degrees and negotiated (Li, 2010; Niyogi De, 2011).

Throughout the narrative, we can see the contingent and conditional nature of freedom which is never absolute, even in the West. She used to imagine a utopian freedom in the West. Her conceptions slowly changed with the course of life in the West. Buddhist wisdom to be aware of contingency and condition had a deep influence on her reflection on life in the West.

Sharin: To some extent, her way of finding freedom is Foucauldian. As Foucault says, freedom is entangled in power relations (Foucault, 1991; Hubert & Rabinow, 1983). Domination results when one has more power than the others. The imbalance of this power can be challenged through resistance and power can be diffused in a way that neither side can perpetually dominate the other. Instead of domination by one side, the relationship between both sides becomes tense. In this relationship, power becomes dynamic, relational and fluid. From this perspective, her freedom is limited and varies according to the possibilities she has for exercising power. Her power is neither absolute nor is her situation hopeless. She cannot completely possess power nor give it away. Power is always in a state of flux, in a slippage. Within this flux, her freedom heightens when she can create tensions within institutional practice on multiple levels and resist domination to some extent.

Naomi: I would not reduce the meaning of freedom to a Foucauldian context in her story. I would allow it to be multiplicitious. I have already explained that the Buddhist notion of freedom, although contingent and conditional, does not affirm postmodern positions completely. Buddhism

freedom has transpersonal aspects, like vast ways of being, wholeness and limitless love. In terms of her life journey, the transpersonal aspect is enmeshed in the political, social and personal aspects of freedom of life. It became very difficult to differentiate their boundaries in her life; at the same time, you can tell that they are not the same.

Sharin: The core concern of freedom in a feminist paradigm, be it political or personal, is patriarchal oppression and gender. Whereas in Buddhism, freedom refers to the freedom within. I found these two types of freedom converged in her life. Feminist freedom, in the sense of freedom from multiple sites of dominations against women assisted her to move towards Buddhist freedom. If she was not economically and socially independent, assertive and strong in exercising her choice and agency, we would not find her meditating alone near Borobudur in Indonesia (Picture 24.). If she could not exercise her feminist subjectivity in terms of freedom, her story would be different! I wonder whether Tibetan Buddhism would ever enter into her story if she had not pursued feminist freedom.

Naomi: Who knows? That is another site to ponder over.

Sharin: When she was exploring Tibetan Buddhism, she invented and negotiated different meanings of Tibetan Buddhist concepts. For example, she did not accept the whole concept of *Karma* from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. She had her own way of interpreting “surrender” and “devotion”. She also decided to explore other religious tradition in her own way. We could see that she was finding a connection with *Krishna* and *Kali* through a loving relationship. Usually, Tibetan Buddhism does not address “the ultimate” in this way. Feminism has played a crucial role in her freedom to go beyond the borders of different religions. However, we should not overlook that she was not very assertive on some issues in Tibetan Buddhism. One of the examples would be the way she appeared very compromising and apologetic in addressing gender discrimination

and hierarchy in Tibetan Buddhist institutions. This indicates how a woman negotiates, compromises and accepts patriarchal features of institution where she finds connection, belonging, love and interest.

Naomi: I agree that on some issues she remained quiet, passive, and apologetic. It is not only in the areas of Tibetan Buddhism, but also the way she covered herself to avoid potential mischief in Bangladesh. We could see that she did not like the clothing *Selwar Kameez* of her culture, yet she did it for strategic purposes. This really complicates the question of resistance versus compromise and negotiation. We need to consider that feminist thinking after liberal feminism is not only about mastery, clarity, and consistency. It is also about vulnerability, contradictions and natural vagueness in human's experience. One cannot completely know a woman's experience, her reasons and emotions. There remains wonder, disappointment, shock and more questions challenging our previous conceptions about representation and knowledge. Perhaps that is why conclusions about a woman's life are impossible. Nothing is prescriptive here. On that note, we can finish our conversation. Our conversation is not exhaustive. We have deliberately left possibilities open for more pondering, creativities and imagination.

Sharin: Yes, let's conclude but I want to reiterate that our conversation embedded in feminist and postmodern paradigms of knowledge production is partial and limited. One of the limitations of this conversation is its emphasis on the relativity, contingency and conditionality of human experience. Whilst this approach might be useful in a Buddhist paradigm, it can be problematic as it invokes apprehension regarding feminist politics. If there is no single claim and no fixed reality, what is the credibility of the narrative of women's oppression under patriarchal structure? This is the intriguing question that has fascinated and haunted feminists. Given that there is never a simple answer, I tried to resolve this issue from the very beginning by asking questions of Naomi from

multiple angles. Unfortunately, there was no satisfactory answer. I understand that Naomi's way refuses to arrive at the answer through delineation and clarity that lay at the very foundation of the Western intellectual traditions. I then concentrated on "what is unfolding" from her ways. I presume the answer to this very question lies in the way Buddhist concepts like emptiness, compassion and *Karma* have been subject to personal interpretations with a deep influence of feminism. In this approach, reality unfolds in a paradoxical way. Here reality is illusionary, all phenomena are contingent, yet human being's actions are counted on the basis of both positive and negative intentions in a cosmic mechanism.

From a combined feminist Buddhist view, this feature provides a dynamic flexible strategy of kindness, spaciousness and interconnection to woman's political position. There are positionality and politics, yet their features are not essentialist. From this point of view, a person can be engaged in politics and claim rights with a deep awareness of the contingency and the conditionality of the human condition as well as unconditional love on the basis of interconnection. Such politics might not bring immediate result in the way a conventional politics based on dualistic opposition and blame would bring. The consequence of this politics is slow and subtle as well as transformative. At the macro level, a living example of a politics based on compassion and emptiness can be H.H the Dalai Lama who has followed a path of non-violence to vindicate the rights of the Tibetan people against Chinese oppression with no apparent success. Like any other approach, this stance can be subject to question and critique. However, in terms of universal love and peaceful co-existence, this way is worth taking. We need to appreciate this way as part of a whole range of innovative ways of resistance against marginalization and discrimination at both the macro and micro-level of social, political and personal history.

Naomi: I am tempted to feel a bit defensive at this point. In a world where war, racism, discrimination, terrorism and poverty are still rampant, we need to think more deeply before critiquing a feminist Buddhist politics based on compassion and emptiness. What lies beneath the social and political illness in this earth? I believe that binary thinking, exclusion, feelings of separation and superiority, as well as grasping the essential nature of self and reality lie at the root of these illnesses. Would she have to escape her country again and again if her difference could be accepted for what it was? How can she find a secure life in the West which is so bound up in the cult of materialism and capitalism? The subtle levels of the causes behind dominance, marginalization and discrimination are deeply related to human being's illusion of a separate and superior existence, binary ways of thinking, a tendency to dominate and an immense craving for accumulating materialistic pleasure. As long as these tendencies persist, human beings will continue to create new possibilities and options of oppression, suffering and marginalization at both a macro and a micro-level. These observations make me value non-duality, emptiness, and compassion for political purposes. However, these concepts should not be seen as a panacea to all the problems.

We also need to take into account that some Buddhist institutions do not successfully implement these concepts in terms of politics and other human being's engagement. In this context, the necessity emerges to combine Eastern intellectual tradition's wisdom on emptiness and compassion to transform the minds with Western intellectual, emancipatory ideas to present a better world on the basis of human being's equality and dignity. Her story reminds us the value of this combination.

Sharin: I am pleased that at last, you become aware of the world around you and finally made connections between your politics of telling her story and the world's situation. I am not against



your politics. All I wanted to do was to make it useful for others who dreamt of a new world, a new day and a new reality where human beings can explore their spiritual and political potential. In fact, I have started to fall in love with the bricolage approach, which can bring out so many things in a single experience. However, I sometimes think that readers might not be used to the surprises and the unpredictableness that a bricolage approach continuously invokes in creating ideas. The bricolage approach might have brought a multiplicity and a free flow of ideas to know a woman's experience, but this is not without pitfalls. There is hardly any delineation, specificity, focus and rigour in the conventional sense. It radically disappoints conventional academic expectations. While I realize that this disappointment is deliberate and strategic for invoking a new way of thinking and interpreting, initially I was against it. Gradually I discovered this alternative way has possibilities in addressing the multiplicity of human experiences, appreciating non-colonial and feminine ways of producing knowledge, and invoking creative critical imagination on the part of readers. But there is a risk of being misunderstood. Only time can tell how this approach can contribute to the academic field. With mixed feelings of hope and apprehension, let's conclude the conversation.



*This page intentionally left blank*

## References

Abe, M. (1985). *Zen and Western Thought*. (LaFleur, William R. Eds.). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Abu-Rabia-Queder, S. (2007). The Activism of Bedouin Women: Social and Political Resistance. *HAGAR: Studies in Culture, Policy and Identities*, Vol. 7(2), pp.67-84.

Abu-Shomar, A. and MacDonald, M. (2012). Dialogic Spaces: Diasporic Negotiation of Difference. *Journal of Postcolonial Cultures and Societies*, Vol. 3(3-4). pp. 1-36.

Adams, Tony E., Jones, Holman S. and Ellis, C. (2015). *Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research*. Oxford: University Press.

Alam, Sadiq M. (2014). Tomae Notun Korey Pabo Boley - Only to Find You Again and Again. *Technology of the Heart*. Retrieved from <http://www.techofheart.co/2014/10/tomae-notun-kore-pabo-bole-only-to-find-tagore-song-rabindra.html>

Albertín, Carbó P(2009). Reflexive Practice in the Ethnographic Text: Relations and Meanings of the Use of Heroin and Other Drugs in an Urban Community [76 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 10(2), Art. 23. Retrieved from: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0902235>.

Alcoff, L. (1988). Cultural Feminism Versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory. *Signs*, Vol. 13 (3), Spring, pp. 405-436.

Alexandru, Maria-Sabina D. (2015). *Performance and Performativity in Contemporary Indian Fiction in English*. NV, Netherlands: KoninkLijke Brill.

Allione, T. (1984). *Women of Wisdom*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Allione, T. (2016, March 7). Tara: The First Feminist. *Lion's Roar Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.lionsroar.com/tara-the-first-feminist/>

Allsopp, R. (1999, January). Performance Writing. *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, Vol. 21 (1), pp. 76-80.

Alston, W. (1967) "Religion" in Edwards, P. (Ed.). *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Volume 7, London: Macmillan.

American Academy of Religion (2012). "AAR Member Spotlight, February 2012: Charles S. Prebish." [online] Available at: [http://www.aarweb.org/Members/Member\\_Spotlight/default.asp](http://www.aarweb.org/Members/Member_Spotlight/default.asp)

Anderson, L. (2008). Reflexivity. In Thorpe, R. and Holt, R. (Eds.). *The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Management Research*. London : Sage. pp. 183-5. Retrieved from <http://srmo.sagepub.com/view/the-sage-dictionary-of-qualitative-management-research/n86.xml>.

Anderson, L. (2006). Analytic Autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol 35 (4), pp. 373-395.

Anderson, Pamela S. (2012). *Re-Visioning Gender in Philosophy of Religion: Reason, Love and Epistemic Locatedness*. England and USA: Ashgate.

Anderson, R. and Braud, W. (2011). *Transforming Self and Others Through Research: Transpersonal Research Methods and Skills for the Human Sciences and Humanities*. State University of New York Press.

Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. (2008). *Doing Narrative Research* (E-reader Version). Sage Publications. Retrieved from <http://0srmo.sagepub.com.prospero.murdoch.edu.au/view/doing-narrative-research/SAGE.xml>

Anzaldú, G. (1987). *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Arenson, D. (2016, 11 Jan). The Hero's Journey. *Nova magazine*, Vol. 22. Retrieved from: <http://novaholisticjournal.com/stories/the-heros-journey>.

Asad, T. (1993). *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ash, S. (1998). Afterword: Dancing with Roland. In Kerr, H. & Nettelbeck, A. (Eds.). *The Space Between: Australian Women Writing Fictocriticism*. Perth: University of Western Australia Press.

Aurobindo, S. (1997). *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust: Pondicherry, India.

Bachelard, G. ([1994]). *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*. Boston: Beacon P.

Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1992). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Balagangadhara, S.N. (1994). 'The Heathen in His Blindness': Asia, the West and the Dynamic of Religion. Leiden, E.J. Brill.

Baldoquín, Gutiérrez H. (2004). *Dharma, Color, and Culture: New Voices in Western Buddhism*. Berkeley: Parallax Press.

Bandlamudi, L. (2010). *Dialogics of Self. The Mahabharata and Culture: The History of Understanding and Understanding of History*. UK : Anthem Press.

Bandlamudi, L. (2015). *Difference, Dialogue & Development: A Bakhtinian World*. London and NY: Routledge.

Banerji, D. (2012). *The Symbol Dawn - Interpretation of First Canto of Sri Aurobindo's Savitri* (Video file). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7vKsNRbD4s>.

Barad, K. (2012). Intra-actions. (Kleinmann, A. Interviewer). *Mousse Magazine*, 34, Summer.

Barker, M. and Rocha, C. (Eds.) (2011). *Buddhism in Australia: Traditions in Change*. Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism.

Barone, T. (2001). *Touching Eternity: The Enduring Outcomes of Teaching*. NY: Teacher College Press.

Barone, T. (2008). Arts-Based Research. In Lisa, M. (Eds). *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. London and New Delhi : Sage Publications.

Barone, T. & Eisner, E. W. (2012). *Arts Based Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Bartlett, A. (2006, December). Irigaray Makes Jam. *M/C Journal*, 9 (6). Retrieved from :<http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0612/07-bartlett.php>>.

Barton, Chayim D. (1990). *Jungian Psychology and the Mahamudra in Vajrayana Buddhism*. (A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy), Sofia University: CA.

Batchelor, S. (2000). *Verses from the Center: A Buddhist Vision of the Sublime*. NY: Riverhead Books.

Batchelor, M. (2012, December). The Wanderer Stilled. *Aeon Magazine*. Retrieved from: <https://aeon.co/essays/from-french-anarchist-to-zen-teacher-a-journey-of-meditation>.

Battiste, M. (1998). Enabling the Autumn Seed: Towards a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language, and Education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, Vol. 22 (1), pp. 16-27.

Battiste, M. (2000). Introduction: Unfolding the Lesson of Colonization. In Battiste, M. (Eds). *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Toronto : UBC Press.



Baumann, M. (2001). Global Buddhism: Developmental Periods, Regional Histories and a New Analytical Perspective. *Journal of Global Buddhism*, Vol. 2, pp. 1-43.

Baumann, Charles, S. and Prebish, M. (Eds). (2002). *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia*. Los Angeles, Bakerly, London: University of California Press.

BBC. (2004). *Tibetan Buddhism*. Religion. Retrieved from:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/subdivisions/tibetan\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/subdivisions/tibetan_1.shtml)

BBC. (2009). *The Buddhist Universe*. Retrieved from

[:http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/beliefs/universe\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/buddhism/beliefs/universe_1.shtml)

Beanard, William G. (1997). *Exploring Unseen Worlds: William James and the Philosophy of Mysticism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Beasley, C. (2005). *Gender and Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers*. London, CA and NY : Sage Publications.

Beckford, J. (2003). *Social Theory and Religion*. Cambridge:Cambridge University Press.

Bedetti, G. (1988). (Review of *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* by Pratt, A. and *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-Visions of Jungian Thought* by Lauter, E. and

Rupprecht, Schreier C. (Eds). *Signs*, Vol 13 (4), Summer, The University of Chicago Press, pp. 583-586.

Beer, De M. (2003). A Seventh Moment Bricoleurship and Narrative Turn to Poetics in

Educational Research. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual

Student Conference, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, 2003. Retrieved from <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00003137.htm>. Retrieved at 23/04/2014

Behar, R. (1993). *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Behar, R. (2007). Ethnography in a Time of Blurred Genres. *Anthropology and Humanism*, Vol. 32 (2) pp 145–155.

Belenky, M.F., Clinchy, B.M., Goldberger, N.R. and Tarule, J.M. (1986). *Women's Ways of Knowing*. NY : Basic Books.

Bernstein, R. (1983). *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Berry, Kathleen S. (2006). Research as Bricolage: Embracing Relationality, Multiplicity and Complexity. In Kincheloe, Joe L. and Tobin, K. (Eds). *Doing Educational Research*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Bestrom, E. (2009). Moving Beyond Borders: The Creation of Nomadic Space Through Travel. *Intersections* 10 (1), pp. 199-217.

Bettis, Joseph D. (1975) *Phenomenology of Religion*. London: SCM.

Bhaba, H. (1994). *Location of Culture*. London and NY :Routledge.

Bhaba, H. (1985). Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12 (1) "Race," Writing, and Difference, Autumn, pp. 144-165.

- Bhavnani, K. and Talcott, M. (2012). Interconnections and Configurations: Toward a Global Feminist Ethnography. In Hesse-Biber, S.N. (Eds.). *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*. (2nd ed.) CA: Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, pp. 639-49.
- Bhattacharya, A. and Renganathan, M. (2015). *The Politics and Reception of Rabindranath Tagore's Drama: The Bard on the Stage*. NY and London: Routledge.
- Biemann, U. (2000). *Been There and Back to Nowhere*. Berlin: Ursula and b-books.
- Bolton, Micheal S. (2014, January). The Mark Inside: Decentralizing the Narrative Subjectivity. *Postmodern Studies*, No. 51.
- Bordo, S. (1990). Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism. In. Nicholson, Linda J. (Eds.). *Feminism/Postmodernism*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Boucher, S. (2007). Daughters of the Buddha Rising Up . Commentary on Issues Raised at the International Conference on Buddhist Women 2006, *Turning Wheel*, Summer.
- Boucher, S. (2013, March). From Our History to Our Future. Presented in Women Voicing the Dharma Conference, Chicago, February 24, 2007. Retrieved from [http://www.sandyboucher.net/documents/sboucher\\_chicago\\_speech.pdf/](http://www.sandyboucher.net/documents/sboucher_chicago_speech.pdf/)  
<http://awakeningbuddhistwomen.blogspot.com/2013/03/from-our-history-to-our-future.html>.
- Boylorn, Robin M. and Orbe, Mark.P. (2014). *Critical Autoethnography: Intersecting Cultural Identities in Everyday Life*. CA: Left Coast Press.
- Bové, Paul A. (1990, October). Power and Freedom: Opposition and the Humanities. *The Humanities as Social Technology*, Vol. 53, pp. 78-92.

Braidotti, R. (1994). *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Braidotti, R. (2006). Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity. *Rhizomes*, 11/12, Fall. Retrieved from: [http://www.rhizomes.net/issue11/braidotti.html#\\_ftn1](http://www.rhizomes.net/issue11/braidotti.html#_ftn1).

Brearley L. (2000, October). Exploring the Creative Voice in an Academic Context. *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 5 (3), pp. 1-23.

Breines, W. (2002). What's Love Got to Do with It? White Women, Black Women, and Feminism in the Movement Years. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 27(4).

Brewster, A. (2005, June). Writing Whiteness: The Personal Turn. *Australian Humanities Review*. Issue 35. Retrieved from <http://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2005/06/01/writing-whiteness-the-personal-turn/>.

Bridges, N. (2006). Learning and Change through a Narrative PhD: A Personal Narrative in Progress. In Trahar, S. (Eds). *Narrative Research on Learning. Comparative and International Perspectives*. Oxford UK: Symposium Book.

Briginshaw, V. (2009). *Dance, Space and Subjectivity*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bucke, R. M. (1960). *Cosmic Consciousness*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc.

Burke, K. (1984). *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Burman, Roy J J. (2005). Syncretism and Community Harmony in Bengal. In Puniyani, R. *Religion, Power and Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times*. New Delhi and London: Sage Publications.

Burggraf, S. (2007). Contemplative Modes of Inquiry in Liberal Arts Education. *Liberal Arts Online*, June. Retrieved

from:<http://www.wabash.edu/news/docs/Jun07ContemplativeModes1.pdf>

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. NY: Routledge.

Byrne, J. (2004, November). Who am I? A Response to the Koan “Woman”. *Woman-Church: A Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. Retrieved from: [http://www.yogaspace.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Who\\_am\\_I.pdf](http://www.yogaspace.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Who_am_I.pdf).

Byrne, J. (2013). Why I Am Not a Buddhist Feminist: A Critical Examination of ‘Buddhist Feminism’. *Feminist Theology* 21 (2).

Caddock, J. (1997). What is Contemplative Spirituality and Why is It Dangerous? : A Review of Brennan Manning's The Signature of Jesus. *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Vol. 10 (19), Autumn.

Cahnmann-Taylor, M. (2008). Arts Based Research: Histories and New Direction. In Cahnmann-Taylor, M. and Siegesmund, R. (Eds). *Arts-Based Research in Education: Foundations for Practice*. NY: Routledge.

Calichman, R. (2006). *Contemporary Japanese Thought*. NY: Columbia University Press.

Call, L. (2002). *Postmodern Anarchism*. Oxford : Lexington Books.

Cameron, Olga C. (2009). The Matrixial Borderspace: Book Review. (Review of *The Matrixial Borderspace* by Ettinger, B.). *Studies in the Maternal* 1 (2).

Camp, Maura E. (2003). *Saying and Seeing-as: The Linguistic Uses and Cognitive Effects of Metaphor*. Berkeley : University of California.

Campbell, J. (1998). Understanding Mythology. Interview taken by Dr. Mishlove, J. *Thinking Allowed*. Thinking Allowed Productions. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.williamjames.com/transcripts/campbell.htm>

Campbell, J. (2004). *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. (Joseph Campbell 100th Anniversary Edition) Princeton University Press: USA.

Campbell, J (2002). *Traveller in Space: Gender, Identity and Tibetan Buddhism*. (Rev. eds.) NY, London : Continuum.

Caputo, J. (1987). *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, the Hermeneutic Project*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.

Carver, Heather M. (2007, March). Methodology of the Heart: A Performative Writing Response. *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies*, Vol. 3 (1). Retrieved from  
<http://liminalities.net/3-1/heart.pdf>

Cascio, T. (1998). Incorporating Spirituality into Social Work Practice: A Review of What to Do. *Families in Society*, Vol. 79, No (5), pp. 523-531.

Cauthen, C. (1995). Writing Ritual and the Cultural Unconscious: The Great Mother Archetype in the Composition Classroom. *The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*, Vol. 1 (1) Article 10. Retrieved from <http://trace.tennessee.edu/jaepl/vol1/iss1/10>.

Cavarero, A. (1995). *In Spite of Plato: A Feminist Rewriting of Ancient Philosophy*. NY :Routledge.

Cesare, Donatella D. (2013). *Gadamer: A Philosophical Portrait* (Keane, N. Trans). Bloomington and Indianapolis : Indiana University Press.

Changchub, G. and Nyingpo, N. (2002). *Lady of the Lotus-Born: The Life and Enlightenment of Yeshe Tsogyal*. Boston and London: Shambhala Publications.

Chaoul, A. (2009). *Chod Practice in the Bon Tradition*. NY: Snow Lion Publications.

Chaplin, J. (1999). *Feminist Counselling in Action*. (2<sup>nd</sup> eds.) London, California and New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Chilton, G. and Patricia, L. (2014). An Overview of Arts-Based Research. In Leavy, P. (Eds). *Arts-Based Research Practice: Merging Social Research and the Creative Arts*. The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research (E-Reader version). Retrieved from:

<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199811755.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199811755-e-003>.

Chimey, J. (2009). Women: A Buddhist View. (Side, D. Interviewer). *View Magazine*, Issue 9.

Chodron, J. (1988, April). Focus on Full Ordination for Buddhist Women. *Mandala Magazine*, Published by Foundation for Preservation of Mahayana traditions (FPMT). Retrieved from: <http://fpmt.org/mandala/archives/older/mandala-issues-for-1988/april/focus-on-full-ordination-for-buddhist-women/>.

Christian, B. (1995). The Race for Theory. In Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. (Eds). *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 457–60.

Cho, S. (2015). The Universality of Buddhism: Proposing a Sakyadhita Sangha. Presented in Compassion and Social Justice: 14th International Conference on Buddhist Women, Sakyadhita, June 23- 30, 2015 Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Chuang, R. (2006). Tibetan Buddhism, Symbolism, and Communication Implications in the (Post) Modern World. *Intercultural Communication Studies* XV (1), pp.12-23.

CIE (Centre for Imaginative Ethnography) (2016). *Welcome to the CIE*. Retrieved from: <http://imaginativeethnography.org/welcome/>

Cixous, H. (1976). The Laugh of the Medusa. (Cohen, K. and Cohen, P. Trans). *Signs*, Vol. 1 (4), Summer, pp. 875-893.

Cixous, H. (1981). Castration or Decapitation. (Kuhn, A. Trans) *Signs*, Vol. 7 (1), pp.41-55.

Cixous, H. (1990). The Laugh of the Medusa. Cohen, K. and Cohen, P. (Trans). In Robyn, W. and Herndl, Diane P. (Eds). *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, pp. 334–49.

Cixous, H. (1996). Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays. In Cixous, H. and Clément, C. (Ed.). *The Newly Born Woman*. (Wing, B. Trans). London: I.B. Tauris Publishers.

Clandinin, D. J. and Huber, J. (2010). Narrative Inquiry. In McGaw, B., Baker, E. and Peterson, P. (Eds.). *International Encyclopaedia of Education* (3rd ed.). New York: Elsevier.



Clark, Carey S. (2016, June). Watson's Human Caring Theory: Pertinent Transpersonal and Humanities Concepts for Educators. *Humanities* 5 (2). Retrieved from <http://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/5/2/21/htm>.

Cohen, K. and Choen, P. (1976). The Laugh of the Medusa: Helene Cixous. *Signs : Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 1 (4), pp. 875-893.

Collins, S. (1982). *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravada Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Comrie, B. (2005). Grammatical Gender and Personification. In Ravid, Diskin D. and Shyldkrot, Bat-Zeev, H. (Eds.). *Perspectives on Language and Language Development: Essays in Honor of Ruth A. Berman*. Boston: Kluwer Academic, pp. 105-114.

Connelly, Michael F. and Clandinin, Jean D. (1990, Jun. – Jul). Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry, *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 19, (5), pp. 2-14.

Conquergood, D. (1995). Of Caravans and Carnivals: Performance Studies in Motion. *The Drama Review*, Vol. 39 (4), Winter, pp. 137-141. Retrieved from <http://www.csun.edu/~vcspc00g/603/Caravans%26Carnivals-DC-TDR.pdf>.

Conquergood, D. (1998). Beyond the Text: Toward a Performative Cultural Politics. In Dailey, S. (Eds.). *The Future of Performance Studies: Vision and Revisions*. Annandale, VA: National Communication Association.

Conquergood, D. (2002). Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research. *The Drama Review* 46(2), pp.145-156.

- Conway, T. (1988, June). *The Criteria for Spiritual Realization: An Investigation of Optimal Well-Being* (PhD Dissertation), California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA.
- Corless, R. (2002). (Review of the Book *Dreaming Me: An African American Woman's Spiritual Journey* by Willis, J. New York: Riverhead Books), *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Vol. 22, pp. 234-236.
- Corona, C. (2007, April-May). The Rise of the Geshe-Ma. *Mandala Magazine*. Retrieved from [http://fpmt.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2007/04/the\\_rise\\_of\\_the\\_geshema.pdf?x24930](http://fpmt.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2007/04/the_rise_of_the_geshema.pdf?x24930)
- Courtin, R. (2013, September 20). Can You Love Without Attachment? *Soul and Spirit Magazine*, UK.
- Cowie, D. E. (2007). Happy 20th Anniversary Sakyadhita! *Sakyadhita Newsletter*, Vol. 16 (1). Retrieved from: <http://sakyadhita.org/docs/resources/newsletters/16-1-2007.pdf>.
- Cowley, Au-Deane S. (1993). Transpersonal Social Work: A Theory for the 1990's. *Social Work*, Vol. 38(5), pp. 527-533.
- Crawford, Frances R. (1994). *Emic Social Work: A Story of Practice*. (PhD Thesis) University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. Retrieved from: [http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au/R?func=dbin-jump-full&local\\_base=gen01-era02&object\\_id=18599](http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au/R?func=dbin-jump-full&local_base=gen01-era02&object_id=18599).
- Crawford, M. (1995, June). *Gender and Psychology : Talking Difference : On Gender and Language*. Sage Publication, Volume 7 (E Reader Version). Retrieved from: <http://0-site.ebrary.com.prospero.murdoch.edu.au/lib/murdoch/reader.action?docID=10567083&ppg=16>.

Crews, B. (1999). Postmodernist Narrative: In Search of an Alternative. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 12, pp. 19-36. Retrieved from:

[http://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/5951/1/RAEI\\_12\\_02.pdf](http://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/5951/1/RAEI_12_02.pdf).

Christian B. (1987). The Race for Theory. *Cultural Critique: The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, No. 6, Spring, pp. 51-63.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of Social research: Meaning and Perspectives in the Research Process*. Allen and Unwin Pty Ltd.

Crowder, R. (2016). Mindfulness based Feminist Therapy: The Intermingling Edges of Self-Compassion and Social Justice. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, Vol. 35 (1-2), pp. 24-40.

Custer, D. (2014). Autoethnography as a Transformative Research Method. *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 19, pp.1-13. Retrieved from: <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR19/custer21.pdf>.

Dalmiya, V. (2001, June). Particularizing the Moral self: A Feminist Buddhist Exchange. *Sophia*, Vol. 40 (1), pp. 61-72.

D'Amato, M. and Moore, Robert T. (2011). *The Specter of Nihilism: On Hegel on Buddhism*. (Student-Faculty Collaborative Research, Paper 28). Robins College, Retrieved from: [http://scholarship.rollins.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1028&context=stud\\_fac](http://scholarship.rollins.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1028&context=stud_fac)

Damaris, Rose, D. (2001, 6th July). *Revisiting Feminist Research Methodologies* (Working Paper Submitted to Status of Women Canada, Research Division). Retrieved from: <http://www.publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/SW21-142-2001E.pdf>.

Daniell, B. (1994, May). Composing (As) Power. *College Composition and Communication*. Vol. 45 (2), pp. 238-246.

Dattaray, D. (2013, December). An Act of Resistance: A Comparative Study of Indigenous Women's Narratives. Proceedings of the Native American Symposium, 2013, Retrieved from: <http://www.se.edu/nas/files/2015/08/A-NAS-2013-Proceedings-Dattaray.pdf>.

Dauphinee, E. (2010, July). The Ethics of Autoethnography. *Review of International Studies* 36 (No 3), pp 799-818.

Dávila, Thorstensson L. (2014). Representing Refugee Youth in Qualitative Research: Questions of Ethics, Language and Authenticity. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education: Studies of Migration, Integration, Equity, and Cultural Survival*, Vol. 8 (1) : Ethical and Engaged Research With Immigrant Communities, pp.21–31.

Davis, Brian R. (Ed.). (2010). *Alice in Wonderland and Philosophy: Curiouser and Curiouser*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Da-Wei, K. (1981). *Chinese Brushwork in Calligraphy and Painting: Its History, Aesthetics, and Techniques*. NY: Dover Publications, Inc.

De Coster, Philippe L. (2010). *The Collective Unconscious and Its Archetypes*. Gent, Belgium : Satsang Press. Retrieved from: [http://archive.org/stream/TheCollectiveUnconsciousAndItsArchetypes\\_100/ArchetypesAlongJung\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/TheCollectiveUnconsciousAndItsArchetypes_100/ArchetypesAlongJung_djvu.txt).

Deen, H. (2006). *The Crescent and the Pen*. Westport : Praeger Publishers.

Deida, D. (2005). *Finding God through Sex: Awakening the One of Spirit through the Two of Flesh*. USA :Sounds True.

Deida, D. (2006). *The Blue Truth: A Spiritual Guide to Life and Death and Love and Sex*. USA: Soundtrue Incorporated.

Deleuze, G., Guattari, F. and Brinkley, R. (1983). What is a Minor Literature? *Mississippi Review*, Vol. 11, No. 3, Essays Literary Criticism, (Winter/Spring), pp. 13-33.

Deleuze, G and Guattari, F. (1993). *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

De Laurates, T. (1984). *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

De Man, P. (1979, December). Autobiography as De-facement. *Comparative Literature*, MLN, Vol. 94 (5), pp. 919-930.

Denzin, Norman K. (1989). *Interpretive Biography*. (E Reader Version) Sage Research Methods. Retrieved from: <http://0-srmo.sagepub.com.prospero.murdoch.edu.au/view/interpretive-biography/SAGE.xml>.

Denzin, Norman, K. (1997). *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*. California. UK, Delhi : Sage Publication.

Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (2000). The Policies and Practices of Interpretation. In Denzin N. K. and Lincoln Y. S. (Eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 897-992.

Denzin Norman, K. (2001 a) *Interpretive Interactionism*. (2nd ed.) (E Reader Version) Sage Publications. Retrieved from:

<http://0srmo.sagepub.com.prospero.murdoch.edu.au/view/interpretive-interactionism/SAGE.xml>.

Denzin, Norman K. (2001 b, September). The Seventh Moment: Qualitative Inquiry and the Practices of a More Radical Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 28, (2), pp. 324-330.

Denzin, Norman K. (2003). *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (2008). Introduction: Critical Methodologies and Indigenous Researcher. In Denzin, Norman K., Lincoln, Yvonna S. and Smith Linda, T. (Eds.). *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*. London, New Delhi and CA : Sage publication.

Denzin, Norman K. (2009). *Qualitative Inquiry under Fire: Toward a New Paradigm Dialogue*. California: Left Coast Press.

Derrida, J. (1996). Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism. In Mouffe, C. (Eds.). *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*. New York: Routledge, pp. 77–88.

Deschene, L. (2010). The Dalai Lama's Little Book of Wisdom: Review & Giveaway. *Tiny Buddha*. Retrieved from <http://tinybuddha.com/blog/the-dalai-lamas-little-book-of-wisdom-review-and-giveaway/>

De Quincey, C. (2008). Reality Bubbles. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 15, pp. 94-101.

Diamond, I. (2004, Summer). Toward a Cosmology of Continual Creation: From Ecofeminism to Feminine Ecology and Umbilical Ties. *Cross Currents*. 54 (2), pp. 7-16.

Diaz, S., Hamilton, Musho D. and Pearson, W. (2010). Integral Feminism. *Enlighten Next Magazine*. Retrieved from: <http://www.enlightennext.org/magazine/j37/integral-feminism.asp?page=1>

Diemberger, H. (2007) *When a Woman Becomes a Religious Dynasty: The Samding Dorje Phagmo of Tibet*. Columbia University Press

Diemberger . H. (2016). Chapter 13: Tibetan Women as Patrons of Printing and Innovation. In Diemberger, H., Ehrhard, F., & Kornicki, P. (Eds.). *Tibetan Printing: Comparison, Continuities, and Change*. Leiden; Boston: Brill. pp. 267-308.

Diversi, M. and Moreira, C. (2009). *Between Talk: Decolonizing Knowledge Production, Pedagogy and Praxis*. CA: Left Cross Press.

Donadlson, Laura E. and Pui-Lan, K. (2015). *Postcolonialism, Feminism and Religious Discourse*. London: Routledge.

Dolma, K. and Denno, E. (2013). *A Hundred Thousand White Stones: An Ordinary Tibetan's Extraordinary Journey*. Wisdom Publications.

Doucet, A. and Mauthner, N. S. (2006). Feminist Methodologies and Epistemologies. In Clifton, Bryant D. and Dennis, Peck L. (Eds.). *Handbook of 21st Century Sociology*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications.

Douglass, F. (1969). *My Bondage and Freedom*. New York: Dover Publications.

- Dreyfus, G. (2003). *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Droogers, Andre F. (1999). The Third Bank of the River. In Platvoet, J. & Molendijk, Arie L. (Eds.). *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion: Contexts, Concepts, and Contests*. Brill: Leiden, Boston, pp. 84-285.
- Dzongsar, Jamyang K. (2003). *Introduction to the Middle way: Chandrakirti's Madhyamakavatara with Commentary*. San Francisco: Khyentse Foundation.
- Eckersley, R. M. (2007). Culture, Spirituality, Religion and Health: Looking at the Big Picture. *Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol. 186 (10), pp. 54–6.
- Eigler, F. (1995). Feminist Criticism and Bakhtin's Dialogic Principle: Making the Transition from Theory to Textual Analysis. *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture*, Vol. 11, pp. 189-203.
- Ellis, C. & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 733-768.
- Ellis, C. (1999). Heartful Autoethnography. *Qualitative Health Research*, 9(5), pp. 669-683.
- Ellis, C. (2002). Being Real: Moving Inward Towards Social Change. *Qualitative Studies in Education* 13 (3), pp 399-406.



Ellis, K. (2009). Quest Through Chaos: My Narrative of Illness and Recovery. *Gender forum: The International Journal for Gender Studies*, Issue 26. Retrieved from:  
<http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/9394/>.

Ellis, C., Adams, Tony E. and Bochner, Arthur P. (2010). Autoethnography: An Overview. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol 12(1), Art. 10. Available at <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108>.

Engels-Schwarzpaul, A C. (2016). Border Crossings: Introduction. *Knowledge Cultures*, 4(1), pp. 11–24.

Engels-Schwarzpaul, A C. and Peters, Michael A. (Eds.). (2013). *Of Other Thoughts: Non-Traditional Approaches to the Doctorate: A Handbook for Candidates and Supervisors*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Epstein, M. (1988). The Deconstruction of the Self: Ego and "Egolessness" in Buddhist Insight Meditation. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, Vol. 20 (I), pp 61-69.

Estes, Pinkola C (2004). Introduction. In Campbell, J. *Hero with A Thousand Faces*. (Joseph Campbell 100th Anniversary Edition). USA: Princeton University Press.

Estes, Pinkola C. (2008). *Women who Run with the Wolves: Contacting the Power of Wild Woman*. UK: Random House Group Company.

Espi, Sara R. (2013). Writing Dyslexia. *Image and Narrative*. Vol. 14, (4), pp.45-56.

Etherington; K. (2006). Reflexivity : Using Our Selves in Narrative Research on Learning. In Trahar, S. (Eds.). *Comparative and International Perspectives*. Oxford UK: Symposium Book.

Ettinger, Bracha L. (2006). *The Matrixial Borderspace*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Faber, R. (2014). *The Divine Manifold*. London : Lxinton Books.

Falk, Nancy A. and Gross. Rita M. (1989). *Unspoken Worlds: Women's Religious Lives*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Farb, N. A. S., Segal, Z. V., Mayberg, H., Bean, J., McKeon, D., Fatimah, Z., & Anderson, A. K. (2007). Attending to the Present: Mindfulness Meditation Reveals Distinct Neural Modes of Self-Reference. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, Vol 2(4), pp. 313–322.

Faux, Robert B. (2005). To Reveal Thy Heart Perchance to Reveal the World. (Review Essay of *Pelias, Ronald J. A Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic and Daily Life*) *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6, (2), Art. 7. (33 Paragraphs) Retrieved from: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs050279>.

Felski, R. (2000). *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*. NY: New York University Press.

Ferguson, Stephen C.(2015). *Philosophy of African American Studies: Nothing Left of Blackness*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ferrer, Jorge N. (2000). The Perennial Philosophy Revisited. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, Vol. 32(1), pp.7-30.

Ferrer, Jorge, N. (2002). *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Finnigan, M. (2013, March, Monday 25). William Roache Misunderstands Karma – It is Not Simple Cause and Effect. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2013/mar/25/william-roache-misunderstands-karma-cause-effect>. Retrieved at 4/12/2014.

Fisher, D. (2013). Review of the book *An American Buddhist Life: Memoirs of a Modern Dharma* by Charles S. Prebish. *Journal of Global Buddhism* 14, pp. 19-22

Fitzgerald, T. (2000). *The Ideology of Religious Studies*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Flavell, H. (2004). *Writing-Between: Australian and Canadian Ficto-criticism* (PhD Thesis) Murdoch University. Retrieved from <http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/53/>.

Flavell, H. (2009, May). Who Killed Jeanne Randolph? King, Muecke or “ficto-criticism”. *Outskirts Online Journal*, Vol. 20. Retrieved from: <http://www.outskirts.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/volume-20/flavell>

Flax, J. (1990). *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Flax, J. (1993). *Disputed Subjects: Essays on Psychoanalysis, Politics and Philosophy*. NY: Routledge.

Fleming, C. and Fullagar, S. (2007). Reflexive Methodologies: An Autoethnography of the Gendered Performance of Sport/Management. *Annals of Leisure Research*, Vol.10 (3-4), pp. 238-256.

- Fook, J. (2002). *Social Work: Critical Theory & Practice*. London : Sage Publications.
- Foster, E. (2005). Desiring Dialectical Discourse: A Feminist Ponders the Transition to Motherhood. *Women's Studies in Communication*, Vol. 28 (1), pp. 57-83.
- Foss, Karen A. and Foss, Sonja, K. (1994). Personal Experience as Evidence in Feminist Scholarship. *Western Journal of Communication* 58, Winter, pp. 39-43. Retrieved from: <http://www.sonjafoss.com/html/Foss25.pdf>.
- Foucault , M. (1980). "*Two Lectures.*" *Power / Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (Gordon, C. Eds.). Brighton: Harvester, pp.78-108.
- Foucault, M. (1983). *This is not a Pipe* (J. Harkness, Trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Foucault, M. (1990). *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans.). New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1991). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*. London: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1997) .The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom. In Rabinow, P. (Eds). *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. The Essential work of Michel Foucault (1954 to 1984)*. (Hurley, R. Trans). Allen Lane: The Penguin Press.
- Franz, Jill M. (2010). Arts-Based Research. In Higgs, J., Cherry, N., Macklin, R. and Ajjawi, R. (Eds.). *Researching Practice : A Discourse on Qualitative Methodologies*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 217 -226.

Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (30th Eds) (Ramos, Bergman, M. Trans.). NY, London : Continuum.

Gadamer, H. (1975). *Truth and Method*. (Weinsheimer, J. and Marsh, Donald G. Trans.). London and NY: Continuum.

Galín, D. (2003). *The Concept 'Self', 'Person' and 'I' in Western Psychology and in Buddhism*. In Wallace, Allan B. (Eds.). *Buddhism & Science: Breaking New Ground*. NY: Columbia University Press.

Gannon, S. (1983). Women as Heroes. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Vol 8 (3), Fall, p.31.

Garner, H. (1995). The Fate of the First Stone [Larry Adler Lecture (1995: Sydney ). *Sydney Papers*, Vol. 7 (4), Spring, pp.30-40. Retrieved from:  
<<http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=960807840;res=IELAPA>> ISSN: 1035-7068. [cited 19 Jul 16].

Gay, David A. and Lynxwile, John P. (2013). Cohort, Spirituality, and Religiosity: A Cross-Sectional Comparison. *Journal of Religion and Society*, Vol. 15.

Gayley, H. (2008). Ontology of the Past and its Materialization in Tibetan Treasures. In Lewis, James R. and Hammer, O. (Ed.). *The Invention of Sacred Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008.

Gayley, H. (2011). The Ethics of Cultural Survival: A Buddhist Vision of Progress in Mkhan po 'Jigs phun's Advice to Tibetans of the 21st Century. In Tuttle, G. (Ed.). Mapping the Modern in Tibet. Sankt Augustin, Germany: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies.

Gayley, H. (2013). Reimagining Buddhist Ethics on the Tibetan Plateau. *The Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, Vol. 20, pp.247-286.

Gayley, H. (2016 a). Controversy over Buddhist Ethical Reform: A Secular Critique of Clerical Authority in the Tibetan Blogosphere. *Himalaya Journal*, Vol. 36. (1), pp. 22-43.

Gayley, H. (2016 b). Love Letters from Golok: A Buddhist Couple in Modern Tibet. New York: Columbia University Press.

Geertz, C. (1973). The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays. New York: Basic Books.

Geertz, C. (1980). Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought. *The American Scholar*, Vol. 49 (2), Spring, pp. 165-179.

Gersch, K. (2013). *The Feminine in Body, Language and Spirituality* (PhD Thesis) The University of Queensland. Retrieved from: <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:313275>.

Gibbs, A. (1997, October). Bodies of Words: Feminism and Fictocriticism - Explanation and Demonstration. *Text*, Vol. 1 (2). Retrieved from: <http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct97/gibbs.htm>.

Gier, N. (1983). Dialectic: East and West. *Indian Philosophical Quarterly: Journal of the Department of Philosophy University of Poona*, Vol. 10 (2), pp.207-218.

Gilbert-Chatalic, M. (2011). A Quiet Revolution: The Empowerment of Female Teachers in American Buddhism. *Evue Française d'Etudes Américaines*, Paris : Association Française

d'études américaines, Miscellanées, pp.65-85. Retrieved from: [www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-d-etudes-americaines-2011-1-page-65.htm](http://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-d-etudes-americaines-2011-1-page-65.htm). Also available at <http://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-d-etudes-americaines-2011-1-page-65.htm>.

Gilbert, H. (1998). Bodies in Focus: Photography and Performativity in Post-Colonial Theatre. *Textual Studies in Canada* 10/11: pp.17–32.

Gilland, M. (2008, November 25). Breaking Through the Waves: Lama Tsultrim Allione Talks About Becoming the Woman She Was Looking For. *Buddhist Peace Fellowship*. Retrieved from <http://www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org/breaking-through-the-waves/>.

Giroux, Henry A. (Eds). (1991). *Postmodernism, Feminism, and Cultural Politics: Redrawing Educational Boundaries*. NY : State University Press.

Glesne, C. (1997). That Rare Feeling: Re-presenting Research through Poetic Transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 3 (2).

Glissant, É. (1997). *Poetics of Relation*. (Wing, B. Trans.). MI: University of Michigan Press.

Goddard, L. (2007). *Staging Black Feminisms*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Goldenberg, Naomi R. (1985). Archetypal Theory and the Separation of Mind and Body: Reason Enough to Turn to Freud? *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, Vol. 1 (1), Spring, pp. 55-72.

Goleman, D. (1985). Truth and Transformation in Psychological and Spiritual paths. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 17(2), pp.183-214.

Golob, S. (2015). Subjectivity, Reflection and Freedom in Later Foucault. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 23(5), pp.666-688.

Gordan, M. and Almutairi Areej, S. (2013, May). Resistance, A Facet of Post-colonialism in Women Characters of Khaled Hosseini's a Thousand Splendid Suns. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, Vol. 2 (3).

Graff, G. and Birkenstein, C. (2007). *"They Say / I Say": The Moves that Matter in Persuasive Writing*. London and NY : Norton and Company INC.

Gray, David E. (2009). *Doing Research in the Real World*. London, New Delhi and California : Sage Publications.

Greenwood, J. (2012). Arts-Based Research: Weaving Magic and Meaning. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 13 (Interlude 1). Retrieved from: <http://www.ijea.org/v13i1/>

Greer, B. and Roof, Wade C. (1992). Desperately Seeking Sheila: Locating Religious Privatism in American Society. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 31 (3), pp. 346-52.

Grierson, E. (2009). Ways of Knowing and Being: Navigating the Conditions of Knowledge and Becoming a Creative Subject. In Grierson, E. and Brearley, L. (Eds). *Creative Arts Research : Narratives of Methodologies and Practices*. Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Gross, Rita M. (1981). Feminism from the Perspective of Buddhist Practice. *Buddhist-Christian Studies Vol. I*, pp.72-82, University of Hawai'i Press.

Gross, Rita M. (1984). The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism: Reflections of a Buddhist Feminist. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, Vol. 16 (2), pp.179 -192.

Gross, Rita M. (1986). Suffering. Feminist theory and Images of Goddess. *Anima*, Vol. 13, pp.39-46.



Gross, Rita M. (1993 a). *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History. Analysis and Reconstruction of Buddhism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Gross, Rita M. (1993 b). Autobiography, Mutual Transformation and the Prophetic Voice in Buddhist Feminism. *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, Vol. 13, University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 127-133.

Gross, Rita M. (1998). *Soaring and Settling: Buddhist Perspective on Contemporary Social and Religious Issues*. New York : The Continuum Publishing Company.

Gross, Rita M. (1999). Pouring Water into Water. *Turning Wheel: The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism*, Spring.

Gross, Rita M. (2009). *A Garland of Feminist Reflections: Forty Years of Religious Exploration*. CA: University California Press.

Gross, Rita M. (2010). How Clinging to Gender Subverts Enlightenment. *Inquiring Mind*, Vol 27:1, Fall, pp. 18-9, 32.

Gross, Rita M. (2014). The Man-made Obstacle. *Tricycle*, Summer Issue. Retrieved from: <http://tricycle.org/magazine/man-made-obstacle/>

Gross, Rita M. (2015). The Real Problem regarding Buddhist women and Gender Justice: Gender-Neutral Models of humanity. Paper Presented at Compassion and Social Justice: 14th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women, June 23-30, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Grosz, Elizabeth A. (1994). *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Indiana University Press: Indiana.

Grosz, E. (2010). Feminism, Materialism, and Freedom. In Coole, D. and Frost, S. (Ed.). *New Materialism: Ontology, Agency and Politics*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University of Press.

Grosfoguel, R. (2011). Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality. *TransModernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* Vol. 1(1), University of California, Berkeley. Available at: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/21k6t3fq#page-2>.

Gunaratana, B.H. (2002). *Mindfulness in Plain English*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Gunnlaugson, O. and Moze, Mary Beth G. (2012). Surrendering into Witnessing: A Foundational Practice for Building Collective Intelligence Capacity in Groups. *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, Vol 7(3), pp. 105–115.

Gutschow, K. (2004). *Being a Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas*. Harvard University Press: USA.

Gyatso, J. (1999, March). Healing Burns with Fire: The Facilitations of Experience in Tibetan Buddhism, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 67, No. 1. (.), pp. 113-147.

Gyatso, J. and Havnevik. H. (2005) *Women in Tibet*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gyalsten, Khenchen K. (2002). *Garland of Mahamudra Practices*. (Rogers, C. Eds.). NY and Colorado: Snow Lion Publications.

Gyamtsso, T. (Khenpo) (2003). *The Sun of Wisdom: Teaching on the Noble Nagarjuna's Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*. Boston, and London: Shambala.

Gyatso, J. (2015). (Review of the Book *Love and Liberation: Autobiographical Writings of the Tibetan Buddhist Visionary Sera Khandro* by Jacoby, 2014) *Jnl of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 83 (4).

Gyatso, J. and Havnivick, H. (2005). *Women in Tibet*. UK: Co Hurst and Co Ltd.

Hamam, K. (2014). *Confining Spaces, Resistant Subjectivities: Toward a Metachronous Discourse of Literary Mapping and Transformation in Postcolonial Writing*. UK: Cambridge Scholar's Publishing.

Halafoff, A. (2013). (In)visibility of Women in Buddhism in Australia. *Seachanges*, Vol. 6: Women Scholars of Religion and Theology.

Halafoff, A., Fitzpatrick, R. And Lam, K. (2012). Buddhism in Australia: An Emerging Field of Study. *Journal of Global Buddhism*, 13 (Annual).

Hall, N. (1980). *The Moon and the Virgin: Reflections on Archetypal Feminine* . London: The Women Press.

Hamati-ataya, I. (2014, January). Transcending Objectivism, Subjectivism and the Knowledge in-between: The Subject in/of 'Strong Reflexivity'. *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 40 (01), pp 153-175.

Hamilton, Melissa H. (2003). *Circumscribing the Spirit: Spiritual Identity and the Autobiographical Acts of Three American Women Writers*. Lincoln: The University of Nebraska.

Hamilton, P. (1992). 'The enlightenment and the birth of social science', in Hall, S. and Gieben, B (Eds)., *Formations of Modernity*. Oxford: Open University and Polity Press, pp. 17–70.

Hammer, M., Hammer, Barry J. and Butler, Alan C. (2014). *Psychological Healing Through Creative Self-Understanding and Self*. Houston, TX : Strategic book Publishing and Right Co.

Hanh, Thich N. (1999). *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*. New York: Broadway Books.

Hanh, Thich N. (2002). *No Death, No Fear: Comforting Wisdom for Live*. New York : Riverhead Books.

Harding, Sandra G. (1987). Conclusions: Epistemological Questions. In Harding, Sandra G. (Eds). *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington.

Harding, S. (1992). Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is "Strong Objectivity? *The Centennial Review*, Vol. 36 (3), Fall, pp. 437-470.

Harrison, P. (1990). *Religion and the 'Religions' in the English Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

Hart, T. (2004, January). Opening the Contemplative Mind in the Classroom. *Journal of Transformative Education*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 28-46.

Hartsock, N. (1990). Postmodernism and Political Change: Issues for Feminist Theory. *Cultural Critique*, No. 14, The Construction of Gender and Modes of Social Division II (Winter, 1989-1990), pp. 15-33.

Hass, M. (2013). *Dakini Power: Twelve Extra Ordinary Women Shaping the Transmission of Tibetan Buddhism in the West*. Snow Lion: Boston and London.

Havnevik, H. (1999). The Life of Jetsun Lochen Rinpoche (1865-1951). *Journal of religious culture = Journal für Religionskultur* No. 27-11.

Havnevik, H. (2000). The Monastic Quest: A Biographical Example (Tibet): The Biography of a Nun. In Reynolds, F. and Carbine, J. A. (Eds.). *The Life of Buddhism*. California: University of California Press.

Haynes, Deborah J. (2009). Contemplative Practice: Views from the Religion Classroom and Artist's Studio. *ARTS: Arts in Religious and Theological Studies* 20, pp.25-33.

Heine, S. (1995). (Review of *Mind as Mirror and the Mirroring of Mind: Buddhist Reflections on Western Phenomenology* by Laycock, Steven W). *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 22, pp. 507-510.

Hekman, S. (1991). Reconstituting the Subject: Feminism, Modernism, and Postmodernism. *Hypatia*, Vol. 6 (2), Summer, pp. 44-63.

Hekman, S. (1997). Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited. *Signs*, Vol. 22 (2), Winter pp. 341-365.

Henderson, Mae G. (1989). Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics and Dialectics and The Black Woman Writer's Literary Tradition. In Wall, C. (Eds.). *Changing Our Own Words*. NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Henderson, Mae G. (2014). *Speaking in Tongues and Dancing Diaspora: Black Women Writing and Performing*. Oxford and Newyork: Oxford University Press.

- Hepburn, A. (1999). Postmodernity and the Politics of Feminist Psychology. *Radical Psychology*, Vol. 1 (2), Fall.
- Herbrechtsmeier, W. (1993). Buddhism and the definition of religion: One more time. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. Vol. 32 (1), pp.1-17.
- Hermans, Hubert J.; Kempen, Harry J. and Van, Loon Rens J. (1992, January). The Dialogical Self: Beyond Individualism and Rationalism. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 47(1), pp. 23-33.
- Herndl, Price D. (1991). Dilemmas of a Feminine Dialogic. In. Bauer, Dale M. and McKinstry, Jaret, S. (Eds). *Feminism, Bakhtin and the Dialogic*. Albany : State University of Newyork Press.
- Hepburn, A. (1999). Postmodernity and the Politics of Feminist Psychology. *Radical Psychology*, Vol. 1 (2), Fall/
- Heyer-Gray, Zoey A. (2001). Gender and Religious Work. In Nason-Clark,N. and Mary, Neithz J. (Eds). *Feminist Narratives and the Sociology of Religion*. CA, MD and Oxford: Altamara Press.
- Hintikka, M. B. and Hintikka, J. (1983). How Can Language Be Sexist? In Harding, S. and Hintikka, M. B. (Eds.). *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*. Netherlands : Springer, pp 139-148.
- Hirschbein, R. (2010). Nuclear Strategies in Wonderland. In Davis, Brian R. (Ed.). *Alice in Wonderland and Philosophy : Curiouser and Curiouser*. NewJersy: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Hoffman, S (2012). *The Hero's Journey: A Postmodern Incarnation of the Monomyth*. (Honors Thesis), The University of Southern Mississippi, The Aquila Digital Community, Paper 39.

Retrieved from: [http://aquila.usm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1038&context=honors\\_theses](http://aquila.usm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1038&context=honors_theses).

Hogan, Frances C. (2000, December). *The Makings of Myself as a Facilitator: An Autoethnography of Professional Practice*. (Ph.D Thesis), Curtin University of Technology.

Holm, G. (2008). Photography as a Performance [34 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 9(2), Art. 38. Retrieved from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0802380>.

Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, A. (2015). The Modern Girl as an Upasika: Recovering the Women in Buddhist Modernisms. Paper presented in Compassion and Social Justice: 14th International Conference on Buddhist Women, Sakyadhita, June 23- 30, 2015, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Holt, Nicholas L. (2003). Representation, Legitimation, and Autoethnography: An Autoethnographic Writing Story. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(1). Article 2. Retrieved from [http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2\\_1/html/holt.html](http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2_1/html/holt.html)

Hollinshead, K. (1998). Tourism, Hybridity, and Ambiguity: The Relevance of Bhabha's 'third space' Cultures. *Journal of Leisure Research*, Vol. 30 (1).

Hooks, B. (1990). *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End.

Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. NY: Routledge.

Hooks, B. (1995). *Killing rage: Ending racism*. NY: Henry Holt and Company.

Hook, B. (2000). *All about love: New Visions*. William Morrow and the Company.

Horner I B. (1930). *Women Under Primitive Buddhism: Laywomen and Almswoman*. Delhi :Motilal Banarshidass Publishers.

Hornsby, J. (2000). *Feminism in Philosophy of Language: Communicative Speech Acts*. In Fricker, M. and Hornsby, J. (Eds.). *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 87–106.

Houston, J. (1996). *A Mythic Life: Learning to Live Our Greater Story*. Harper: SanFrancisco.

Houston, J. (2012, November). Archetypes and Metaphors to Describe Spiritual Experience: On Soul, Shadow and the American Psyche: An Interview with Jean Houston. (London, S. Interviewer). *Awaken*. Retrieved from :<http://www.awaken.com/2012/11/on-soul-shadow-and-the-american-psyche-an-interview-with-jean-houston/>.

Houston, J. (2013, August). Embrace the Hero's Journey: An Interview with Jean Houston on Living a Mythic Life in Today's Busy World. (Bottero, K. Interviewer ). *The Mindful World*. Retrieved from: <http://www.themindfulword.org/2013/embrace-hero-journey-jean-houston/>.

Howard, L. (2005). *Introducing Ken Wilber: Concepts for Evolving World*. USA: Author house

Hsieh, S. (2010). *Buddhist Meditation as Art Practice: Art Practice as Buddhist Meditation*. (Doctoral Thesis) Northumbria University. Retrieved from <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/1942/>,

Hubert, Dreyfus L. and Rabinow, P. (1983). *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). The University of Chicago Press.

Humm, M. (1997). *Feminism and Film*. Edinburgh & Indiana University Press: Edinburgh.



Humphreys, M. (2005, December). Getting Personal: Reflexivity and Autoethnographic Vignettes. *Qualitative Inquiry*. Vol.11 (6).

Huxley, A. (1944). *The Perennial Philosophy*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Hyland, T. (2013). Mindfulness, Free Will and Buddhist practice: Can Meditation Enhance Human Agency? Paper presented at the First International Conference on Mindfulness – La Sapienza, University of Rome – May 11, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.turningpoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Mindfulness-Free-Will-and-Buddist-Practice-Can-Meditation-Enhance-Human-Agency.pdf>

Ire, J. (1997, January 1). *Autobiographical Writing as Part of Therapy: A Tool for Self-Understanding and Change*. (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Massachusetts - Amherst. Retrieved from <http://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations/AAI9737541>

Irigaray, L. (1985). *This Sex Which Is Not One*. (Porter, C. and Burke, C. Trans.). Ithaca: Cornell UP.

Irigaray, L. (2002). *To Speak is Never Neutral*. NY: Routledge.

Islam, R.(2014, January).The Influence of British Empire and English Literature on the Social Life Style of the People of Bangladesh. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature* (IJSELL), Vol. 2 (1), pp. 40-48.

Jackson, S. (2004). *Differently Academic, Developing Life Long for Women in Higher Education*. Netherlands: Kluwer academic Publishers.

- Jacoby, S. (2014). *Love and Liberation: Autobiographical Writings of the Tibetan Buddhist Visionary Sera Khandro*. Columbia University Press.
- Jacoby, Sarah H. (2015, December). Relational Autonomy in the Life of a Contemporary Tibetan Ḍākinī. *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, No. 34, pp. 79-113.
- Janesick, Valerie J. (2016). *Contemplative Qualitative Inquiry: Practicing the Zen of Research*. Routledge: NY.
- Jhonston, D. (2014). Jungian Lights on Sri Aurobindo's Savitri: A Myth for Our Time. Retrieved from: <http://intyoga.online.fr/jl.htm>.
- Jiang, X. (2000). Feminist Epistemology: An Introduction. *CSA Academic Perspective*, Vol. 1, pp. 56-58. Retrieved from: <http://csasc.org/2005/journal/ae13.pdf>
- Jin, Martin Cortazzi L. (2006). Asking Questions, Sharing Stories and Identity Construction: Sociocultural Issues in Narrative Research. In Trahar, S. (Eds.). *Narrative Research on Learning: Comparative and International Perspectives*. Oxford UK: Symposium Book.
- Joan, Williams C. (1991). Dissolving the Sameness/Difference Debate: A Post-Modern Path Beyond Essentialism in Feminist and Critical Race Theory. *Duke Law Journal*, Vol. 40 (2), pp. 296-323. Retrieved from: <http://scholarship.law.duke.edu/dlj/vol40/iss2/3> .
- Jobling, J. (2010). *Fantastic Spiritualities: Monsters, Heroes and the Contemporary Religious Imaginations*. NY: T and T Clark International.
- Jones, A. (1999). The Limits of Cross-Cultural Dialogue: Pedagogy, Desire, and Absolution in the Classroom. *Educational Theory* 49 (3), Summer.

Jones, Ann R. (1981). Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of "L'écriture Feminine." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 7 (2), pp. 247-263. Summer.

Jung, Carl G. (1971). *The Portable Jung*. (Hull, R.f.C. Trans). NY: The Viking Press.

Kalmanson, L. (2012, November). Buddhism and bell hooks: Liberatory Aesthetics and the Radical Subjectivity of No-Self, *Hypatia*, Vol. 27 (4).

Kalupahana, David J. (1986). *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā of Nāgārjuna*. Albany, NY: Sunny Press.

Kaneko, M. (2006, January 1). *Sexuality and Spirituality: Subjectivity and Resistance in the Works of Setouchi Jakucho* (Dissertation) University of Pennsylvania. Paper AAI3225480. Retrieved from: <http://0-search.proquest.com.prospero.murdoch.edu.au/docview/305254099?pq-origsite=summon&accountid=12629>.

Kang, D. (1997). *Cultural Components in Second Language Development by Learners of English*. (Research Report). U.S. Department of education, Educational Resource Information Centre. Retrieved from: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED413779.pdf>.

Kaplan, Ann E. (1997). *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze*. Routledge: NY and London.

Karmapa Official Website (2015). *Gyalwang Karmapa Makes Historic Announcement on Restoring Nuns' Ordination*. Retrieved from: <http://kagyuoffice.org/gyalwang-karmapa-makes-historic-announcement-on-restoring-nuns-ordination/>

Karnieli-Miller, O., Strier, R. and Pessach, L. (2009). Power Relations in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Resesearch*; Vol. 19 (2), pp. 279-289.

Kaschak, E. (2011). The Mattering Map: Multiplicity, Metaphor and Morphing in Contextual Theory and Practice. *Women and Therapy*, Vol. 34(1–2), pp.6–18.

Kaschak, E. and Sharratt, S. (1979). Sex Roles and Androgyny in Latin America: A Psychological Perspective. *Reportopio Americano*, Spring.

Kawano, Y. (2011). Spirituality and Indigenous Knowledges: Study of Kototama and Decolonization in the School System. In Wane, N., Manyimo, E. & Ritskes, E. (Eds.). *Spirituality, Education & Society: An Integrated Approach*. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers, pp. 97-110.

Kerr, H. (2013). Fictocriticism, the 'Doubtful Category' and 'The Space Between'. *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, pp.93-96. Retrieved from <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/JASAL/article/view/9959>

Kerr, H. and Nettelback, A. (1998). *The Space between: Australian Women Writing Fictocriticism*. Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press.

Khuankaew, O. (2008). Tackling Gender and Sexual Discrimination in Buddhism. *Arrows for Change*, Vol. 14, Bumper Issue No. 1 & 2.

Kimberly (2013). *Samsara in Buddhism*. Buddhist.org. Retrieved from: <https://buddhists.org/buddhist-symbols/samsara-in-buddhism/>.

Kincheloe, Joe L. (2001). Describing the Bricolage: Conceptualizing a New Rigor in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol 7 (6), pp. 679-692, Sage Publications.

- Kincheloe, Joe L. (2008). Bricolage and the Quest for Multiple Perspectives: New Approaches to Research in Ethnic Studies. In Fong, Timothy P. (Eds.). *Ethnic Studies Research: Approaches and Perspectives*. Lanham: Altamara Press.
- King, R. (1999). *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'the Mystic East'*. London and NY: Routledge.
- King, Richard C. (2006). Stealing Cultural Studies: Dialogues With Norman K. Denzin. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, Vol 30, Number 4, November, pp. 383-394.
- King, Sallie B. (2009). *Socially Engaged Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai Press.
- Klein, Ann. C. (1995). *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen: Buddhists, Feminist and the Art of Self*. Boston B : Beacon Press.
- Klein, Anne C. (1994). Presence with a Difference: Buddhists and Feminists on Subjectivity. *Hypatia*, Vol.9 (4), Fall, pp. 112-130.
- Knowles, J. G., & Cole, A. L. (2008). *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Koertge, N. (1995, June). Feminist Epistemology. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* Vol. 775, pp. 413–419.
- Kondo, Dorinne K. (1990). *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. Chicago and London : University of Chicago Press.
- Konik, A. (2016). Reconsidering Foucault's Dialogue with Buddhism. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 35 (1), pp. 37-53.

- Koppedrayer, K. (2007). Feminist Applications of Buddhist Thought. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, Vol 23 (1), Spring, pp.121-140.
- Kottiswari W.S. (2008). *Postmodernism in the Indian Context-Gita Hariharan and Shashi Deshpande as Postmodernists*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons.
- Kozinets, Robert V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. London, New Delhi: California Sage Publication.
- Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. NY: Columbia University Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1984). *Revolution in Poetic Language*. NY: Columbia University Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1998). The Subject in Process. In Ffrench, P. And Lack, R. (Eds). *The Tel Quel Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp.133-178.
- Kundert-Gibbs, John L. (1999). No-thing is Left to TellZen/Chaos Theory in the Dramatic Art of Samuel Beckett. Madison : Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Lacan, J. (1978). *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* .New York: Norton.
- Lackoff, G. and Jhonson, M. (1980, August). Conceptual Metaphor in Every Day Life. *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 77 (8), pp.453-486.
- Lankford, B. (2005). *Wicca Demystified*. NY : Marlowe and Company.
- Langellier, Kristin M. (1999). Personal Narrative, Performance, Performativity: Two or Three things I Know for Sure. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, Vol. 19 (2), pp.125-144.

Lather, Patti A. (1990). *Reinscribing Otherwise*. In Guba, Egon G.(Eds). *The Paradigm Dialog*. Newbury Park, London and New Delhi : Sage Publications.

Lather, P. (1991). *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy within/in the Postmodern*. NY and London :Routledge.

Lather, P. (2006). Paradigm Proliferation as a Good Thing to Think With: Teaching Research in Education as a Wild Profusion. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Vol. 19 (1), pp. 35-57.

Lauter, E. (1984). *Women as Mythmakers: Poetry and Visual Arts by Twentieth Century Women*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Lauter, E. (1985). Visual images by Women: A Test Case for the Theory of Archetypes. In

Lauter, E. & C. S. Rupperecht (Eds.). *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-visions of Jungian Thought*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, pp. 46-83.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2005). Reflections on Portraiture: A Dialogue Between Art and Science. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 11 (3), pp. 3-15.

Leaming, L. (2011). *Married to Bhutan*. USA : Hay House.

Leavy, P. (2009). *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Leavy, P. (2008). Performance-Based Emergent Methods. In Hess-Biber, Sharlene N. and Leavy, P. (Eds). *The Handbook of Emergent Methods*. NY: Guilford Press.

Lee, Glaiza M., Diaz E. and Beltran, S. (2012, July 29). The Heart of a Single Stroke. *Buddhist Art News*. Retrieved from: <https://buddhistartnews.wordpress.com/2012/08/01/the-heart-of-a-single-stroke/>.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*. Nicholson-Smith, D. (Trans). MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Levin, L. (2009). The Performative Force of Photography. (Review of the essay *The Barnardo's Babies: Performativity, Shame, and the Photograph* by Ash, S. *Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 19(4), 2005, pp507–521; and the books *The Civil Contract of Photography* by Azoulay, A. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008 and *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* by Taylor, D. 2003. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.). *Photography & Culture*, Vol. 2 (3), pp. 327–336.

Licona, Adela C. (2012). *Zines in Third Space: Radical Cooperation and Borderlands Rhetoric*. State University of NY Press.

Li, K. (2015). Analysis on the Space Commonality of Chinese Calligraphy and Painting, Paper presented in International Conference on Arts, Design and Contemporary Education (ICADCE) 2015. Retrieved from: <file:///D:/ICT%20BACKUP/98585/Downloads/AC1154.pdf>

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R. and Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis and Interpretation*. Sage publications. (E reader version). Retrieved from: <http://murdoch.summon.serialssolutions.com/?#!/search?ho=t&l=en&q=%20Narrative%20Research>.



Lin, C. (2013). A Buddhist Take on the Mind Body Problem. *Contemporary Buddhism*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp.239–264, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2013.832081>

Lincoln, Y.S. and Denzin, N. K. (2003). *Turning Points in Qualitative Research: Tying Knots in a Handkerchief*. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press.

Linda, Scott M. (1992). Playing with Pictures: Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Advertising Visuals. In Sherry, J. and Sternthal, B, (Eds.). *Advances in Consumer Research*. Vol 19, Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research, pp. 596-612.

Linde, C. and Labov, W. (1975). *Spatial Networks as a Site for the Study of Language and Thought*. *Language*, Vol. 51 (4). pp. 924–39.

Lindner, K. and Stetson, G. (2009). For Opacity: Nature, Difference and Indigeneity in Amazonia. *TOPIA*, Number 21: Nature Matters, Spring. Retrieved from: <http://topia.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/topia/article/view/23254/31286>

Lion's Roar. (2009, November 5). *Why was Ajahn Brahm Expelled from the Wat Pa Phong Sangha?* Retrieved from :<http://www.lionsroar.com/why-was-ajahn-brahm-expelled-from-the-wat-pa-phong-sangha>.

Lister, Pam G. (2003). Feminist Dilemmas in Data Analysis: Researching the Use of Creative Writing by Women Survivors of Sexual Abuse. *Qualitative Social Works*, Vol. 2(1), pp.45-59.

Litosseliti, L. (2013). *Gender and Language Theory and Practice*. London and NY: Routledge Publications.

Liu, J H. (2008). Asian Epistemologies and Contemporary Social Psychological Research. In Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonna S. (Eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lopez Donald S. (1995) *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press

Lopez, Donald S. (1998). *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lowan-Trudeau, G. (2012). Methodological Métissage: An Interpretive Indigenous Approach to Environmental Education Research. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, Vol. 17, pp.113-130.

Loy, D. R. (2010). Secular Buddhism? *Tricycle Magazine*, Fall. Retrieved from <http://www.tricycle.com/reviews/secular-buddhism>

Lyotard, J.F. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

Mackenzie, V. (1998). *Snow in the Cave: A Western Woman's Quest for Enlightenment*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Macku, K. (2013, March 5). The Five Feminine Sexual Archetypes. *Elephant Journal*. Retrieved from: <https://www.elephantjournal.com/2013/03/the-five-feminine-sexual-archetypes-kevin-macku/>

Macovski, M. (1997). *Dialogue and Critical Discourse: Language, Culture, Critical Theory* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Oxford University Press.

MacDonald, S. (2011). *Exquisite care: The Role of Buddhist practices in Connecting with People with Dementia*. Buddhist Chaplaincy Training Program, Upaya Zen Centre, Santa Fe, NM.

Available at: <https://www.upaya.org/uploads/pdfs/1-macdonaldabridgedthesis.pdf>

Madison, D. S. and Hamera, J. (2006). Performance Studies at the Intersections. In Madison, D. S. & Hamera, J. (Eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Performance Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc, pp.xi-xxv.

Mahathera, S. (Ven) (2001). *The 31 Planes of Existence*. Malayshiya: The Inward Path.

Mahmood, S. (2005). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Mahoney, Maureen A. and Yngvesson, B. (1992). The Construction of Subjectivity and the Paradox of Resistance: Reintegrating Feminist Anthropology and Psychology. *Signs* Vol. 18 (1) pp.44-72.

Marteu, E. (2014). Bedouin Women's organizations in the Naqab: Social Activism for Women's Empowerment? In Mansour, N.; Richter-Devroe, S. Abu-Rabia-Queder, S. and Ratcliffe, R. (Eds.). *The Naqab Bedouin and Colonialism: New Perspectives*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Martinez D. (200, December). Where the Human Heart Goes Astray: Rashomon, Boomtown and Subjective experience. *Film Studies*, Issue 11, Winter. 33, pp. 27-36.

- Masuzawa, T. (2005). *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- May, R. (1991). *The Cry for Myth*. NY : Haddon Craftsman Ic.
- McCagney, N. (1997). *Nāgārjuna and the Philosophy of Openness*. Maryland :Rowman and Little Field Publishers.
- McDonough, Carla J. (2006). Language of Blood: Embodied Women's Experiences in Adrienne Kennedy's *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White*. *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* , Fall, Vol. XXI, No. 1, pp. 57-72.
- McMahan, D. (2004). *Modernity and the Discourse of Scientific Buddhism*. *Journal of American academy of religion*. December. Vol 72, No.4. p.897 - 933.
- McMahan, D. (2008). *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- McMahan, D. (2015). An Introduction to Buddhist Modernism - Interview with David McMahan. Retrived from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55wx6n6G5DI>.
- McLaren, Margaret A. (1997) Foucault and the Subject of Feminism. *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 23 (1), Spring, pp. 109-128.
- McLaren, Margaret A. (2002). *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity*. State University New York Press.
- McLennan, G. (1995). Feminism, Epistemology and Postmodernism: Reflections on Current Ambivalence. *Sociology*, 08/1995, Vol. 29 (3), pp. 391-409.

McNamara, P. (2009). Feminist Ethnography: Storytelling that Makes a Difference. *Qualitative Social Work*, Vol. 8(2), pp. 161–177.

McNiff, S. (1998). *Art-Based Research*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

McQuillan, M. (2001). Introduction: Five Strategies for Deconstruction. In McQuillan, M. (Eds.). *Deconstruction: A Reader*. NY: Routledge. pp. 1-43.

Metta, M. (2010, October). *Writing Against, Alongside and Beyond Memory : Life writing as Reflexive, Poststructuralist Feminist Research Practice* (E Reader Version). Peter Lang AG.

Retrieved from [http://sr4lp2wr3c.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-](http://sr4lp2wr3c.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-)

[2004&ctx\\_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-](http://sr4lp2wr3c.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-)

[8&rft\\_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft\\_val\\_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:book&rft.ge](http://sr4lp2wr3c.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:book&rft.genre=book&rft.title=Writing+Against%2C+Alongside+and+Beyond+Memory+%3A+Lifewriting)

[nre=book&rft.title=Writing+Against%2C+Alongside+and+Beyond+Memory+%3A+Lifewriting](http://sr4lp2wr3c.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:book&rft.genre=book&rft.title=Writing+Against%2C+Alongside+and+Beyond+Memory+%3A+Lifewriting)

[+as+Reflexive%2C+Poststructuralist+Feminist+Research+Practice&rft.au=Metta%2C+Marilyn](http://sr4lp2wr3c.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:book&rft.genre=book&rft.title=Writing+Against%2C+Alongside+and+Beyond+Memory+%3A+Lifewriting)

[&rft.date=2011-01-](http://sr4lp2wr3c.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:book&rft.genre=book&rft.title=Writing+Against%2C+Alongside+and+Beyond+Memory+%3A+Lifewriting)

[14&rft.pub=Peter+Lang+AG%2C+Internationaler+Verlag+der+Wissenschaften&rft.isbn=97830](http://sr4lp2wr3c.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:book&rft.genre=book&rft.title=Writing+Against%2C+Alongside+and+Beyond+Memory+%3A+Lifewriting)

[34305150&rft.externalDBID=n%2Fa&rft.externalDocID=1055874&paramdict=en-US](http://sr4lp2wr3c.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:book&rft.genre=book&rft.title=Writing+Against%2C+Alongside+and+Beyond+Memory+%3A+Lifewriting)

Metta, M. (2015, May). Embodying Mêtis: The Braiding of Cunning and Bodily Intelligence in Feminist Storymaking. *Outskirts: Feminisms along the Edge*, Vol.32. Retrieved from

<http://www.outskirts.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/volume-32/marilyn-metta>

Metzner, R. (1980). Ten Classical Metaphors of Self-Transformation. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 12(1), pp.47-62.

Mignolo, Walter D. (2009). Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom. *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 26(7–8), pp. 1–23.

Minami, M. (1994). *Asian Narratives*. Washington, D. C.: ERIC Clearing House

Minh-ha, Trinh T. (1987). Difference: ‘A Special Third World Women Issue’. *Feminist Review*, No. 25, Spring, pp. 5-22.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. (1989). *Woman, Native, Other*. Indiana UP: Bloomington and Indianapolis.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. (1991). *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics*. NY, London : Routledge .

Minh-ha, Trinh T. (1996, Spring). Painting with Music: A Performance Across Cultures. *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture*, Vol. 18. (3), pp. 3-19.

Minh-ha, Trin T. (1998, 12 August). Shifting The Borders of The Other. (Grzinic, M. Interviewer) *Telepolis*. Retrieved from <https://www.heise.de/tp/features/Shifting-The-Borders-of-The-Other-3441351.html>

Mignolo, Walter D. (2009). Epistemic Disobedience: Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom. *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 26(7–8), pp. 1–23.

Mikkonen, K. (2007, October). The ‘Narrative is Travel’ Metaphor: Between Spatial Sequence and Open Consequence. *Narrative*, Vol. 15 (3), pp. 286–305.

Milovanovic, D. (1995). Dueling Paradigms: Modernist v. Postmodernist Thought. *Humanity and Society* 19(1), pp. 1-22.

Mirchandani, K (2004). Webs of Resistance in Transnational Call Centres. In Thomas, R.; Mills, A. and Mills, J. (Eds). *Identity Politics at Work*. London: Routledge, pp.179–95.

Mitchell, Richard G (Jr) and Charmaz, K. (April, 1996). Telling Tales, Writing Stories: Post modernist Visions and Realists: Images in Ethnographic Writing. *Journal of Contemplative Ethnography*, Vol 25 (1).

Mizzi, R. (2010). Unraveling Researcher Subjectivity Through Multivocality in Autoethnography. *Journal of Research Practice*. Vol. 6 (1) Article M3. Retrieved from <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/201/185>

Mohanty, C. T. (1991). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. In Mohanty, C. T., Russo, A. and Torres, L. (Eds). *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Mohr, T. and Tsedroen, J. (2010). (Eds). *Dignity & Discipline: Reviving Full Ordination for Buddhist Nuns*. Edited by. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Monaco, J. (2010, May). Memory Work, Autoethnography and the Construction of a Fan-Ethnography. *Participation: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, Vol 7 (1), pp. 102-142.

Morales, I. (2012, July 26). Calligraphy in a Single Stroke. *GMA News*. Retrieved from: <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/266882/lifestyle/artandculture/calligraphy-in-a-single-stroke>.

Morford, M. and Lenardon, Robert J. (2007). *Classical Mythology*. NY, Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Morrison, B. (2009, March). Reconfiguring Kristeva and Irigaray in the Buddhist Intellectual Tradition. *外国文学* no.58紀要論文, p.83-94. Retrieved from <https://uuair.lib.utsunomiya-u.ac.jp/dspace/handle/10241/6916>.

Morgan, S. (1987). *My Place*. Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

Moulton, J. (1983). A Paradigm of Philosophy: The Adversary Method. In Harding, S. and Hintikka, M.B. (Eds.). *Discovering Reality*. Boston: D. Reidel.

Mullen, Eve L. (1998, October). Orientalist Commercializations: Tibetan Buddhism in American Popular Film. *Journal of Religion and Film*, Vol. 2 (2).

Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. *Screen*. 16 (3), Autumn, pp. 6–18.

Muncey, T. (2005, March). Doing Autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 4(1), Article 5. Retrieved from [https://sites.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/4\\_1/html/muncey.htm](https://sites.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/4_1/html/muncey.htm).

Murdock, M. (1990). *The Heroine's Journey*. Boston and London: Shambhala Publications.

Murdock, M. (1994). *Father's Daughters: Transforming Father-Daughter Relationship*. USA: Ballantine Book.

Murdock, M. (2004 a, June). *Emotional Truth*. (Goodwin Lynn, B. Interviewer). Retrieved from <http://www.maureenmurdock.com/emotionaltruth.html>.

Murdock, M. (2004 b). Memory and Myth. *Story Circle Journal*, 12/04, Vol. 8 (4) Retrieved from: <http://www.maureenmurdock.com/memoryandmyth.html>.



- Murdock, M. (2005). Difference between Feminine and Masculine Journey. (Davis.M. Interviewer), *C.G. Jung Society of Atlanta*, Summer. Retrieved from <http://www.jungatlanta.com/articles/summer05-maureen-murdock.pdf>. Retrieved 30/7/2014
- Musselman, Jack G. and Thompson, Julie M. (1998). (Review of *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* by J. Butler) *Symploke*, Vol. 6 (1), pp. 205-207.
- Nadkarni, Mangesh V. (2012). Savitri – The Golden Bridge, the Wonderful Fire: An introduction to Sri Aurbindo’s Epic. Aurville: Savitri Bhaban.
- Nancy, J. (1994). *The Experience of Freedom*. Stanford University Press.
- Nasr, Hossein S. (1996). *Religion and the Order of Nature*. NY : Oxford University Press.
- Nazaruk, M. (2012). Behar's Vulnerable Writing as a Textual Strategy in Ethnography. *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford (Online)*, Vol. IV, No. 2, pp.150-168.
- Needelman,S. (2013). Feminine Writing- Feminine Communication. *The Defiance Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedefianceproject.com/feminine-writing-feminine-communication/>
- Neff, K. D. (2003). The Development and Validation of a Scale to Measure Self-Compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2(3), pp.223–250.
- Neile, Caren S. and Behar, R. (2009, September-December). Between Textuality and Orality: An Interview with Ruth Behar. *Storytelling, Self, and Society*, Vol. 5 (3), pp. 145-151.

Nettelbeck, A. (1998). Notes Toward an Introduction. In Kerr, H., Nettelbeck, A. (Eds.). *The Space Between: Australian Women Writing Fictocriticism*. Perth: University of Western Australia Press.

Nicholson, S. (2008). *In the Footsteps of the Heroine: The Journey of Integral Feminism*. USA: Lulu Publishers.

Nicholson, S. (2011). The Problem of Woman as Hero in the Work of Joseph Campbell. *Feminist Theology* 19(2), pp. 182–193. Sage publications. Retrieved from: <http://facweb.northseattle.edu/bschaeffer/Essay%204:Campbell/academic%20articles/Women%20as%20Hero.pdf>. Retrieved at 13/5/2014.

Nickerson-Crowe, K. (2005): An Arts-Based Approach to Conceptual Educational Practice. *Canadian Journal of Education* 28 (3). Retrieved from: <http://www.csse-scee.ca/CJE/Articles/FullText/CJE28-3/CJE28-3-nickerson.pdf>.

Nicol, B. (2009). *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nikhilananda, S. (1942). *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*. Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math.

Niyogi, De E. (2011). *Empire, Media and the Autonomous Woman: A Feminist Critique of Postcolonial Thought*. Oxford University Press.

Nnaemaka, O. (2003). Negro-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa's Way. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 29 (2), pp. 379-80.

Nongbri, B. (2013). *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Novick, R. (1999). *Fundamentals of Tibetan Buddhism*. New York: Crossing Press.

Noy, C. (2004, April). Performing Identity: Touristic Narratives of Self-Change. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, Vol. 24 (2), pp. 115–138.

Noy, C. (2008). Pages as Stages: A Performance Approach to Visitor Books. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 35 (2), pp. 509–528.

Nyanaponika, T. (1972). *The Power of Mindfulness*. San Francisco: Unity Press.

Olson, R. (2013). Psyche as Postmodern Condition: The Situation of Metaphor in James Hillman's Archetypal Psychology. *Janus Head* Vol 13(12), Pittsburgh, PA: Trivium Publications, pp.61-91.

Otto, R. (1931). *The Idea of the Holy*. (6th eds. Trans. J.W. Harvey). London: Humphrey Milford and Oxford University Press

Palmo, T. (2011). *Into the Heart of Life*. Ithaca, New York :Snow Lion Publications.

Pallí, C. (2006). Liminal belonging: Routes into Research. *Athenea Digital*, Num 9. Retrieved from: <http://atheneadigital.net/article/view/n9-palli/286-html-en>

Pande, R. (2015). 'I Arranged My Own Aarriage': Arranged Marriages and Post-Colonial Feminism. *Gender, Place & Culture : A Journal of Feminist Geography* . Vol.22 (2), pp.172-187.

Paniker, A. (2003). *Indian Narratology*. New Delhi: Indra Gandhi National Centre for Arts.

Pang, Anna M. (2013, 28 November). Three Perfections: Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting in Chinese Art. National Gallery of Victoria. Retrieved from <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/three-perfections-poetry-calligraphy-and-painting-in-chinese-art/>

Paré, D.A. & Lysack, M. (2006). Exploring Inner Dialogue in Counsellor Education. *Canadian Journal of Counselling* Vol. 40(3), pp.131 - 144.

Parker, I. (1999). Critical Reflexive Humanism and Critical Constructionist Psychology. In Nightingale, D. and Cromby, J. (Eds.). *Social Constructionist Psychology: A Critical Analysis of Theory and Practice*. (1st ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press, pp. 23–36.

Parpart, Jane L., Connelly, P. and Barriteau, Eudine V. (Eds). (2000). *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*. Ottawa, Canada: International Development Research Centre.

Pasi, J. (2016). Writing Nature From the Feminine: An Ecofeminist Analysis of the Gardens in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*. *Journal of Literary Studie*, Vol 32 (1): African Women, Post/Nationalism and the Creative Imagination, pp. 17-31.

Pasricha, Satwant K. (2008). *Can the Mind Survive Beyond Death? In Pursuit of Scientific Evidence*. New Delhi: Harman Publishing House.

Pathak, Archana A. (2010). Opening My Voice, Claiming My Space: Theorizing the Possibilities of Postcolonial Approaches to Autoethnography. *Journal of Research Practice*, Vol. 6 (1), Article M10. Retrieved from <http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/article/view/231/191>.

Patke, Rajeev S. (2013). *Modernist Literature and Postcolonial Studies*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press.

- Paul, D. Y. (1985). *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahāyāna Tradition*. London, England : University of California Press Ltd.
- Pelias, Ronald J. (2014). *Performance: An Alphabet of Performative Writing*. CA: Left Coast Press.
- Peng, K. and Nisbett, Richard E. (1999, September). Culture, Dialectics, and Reasoning About Contradiction. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 54 (9), pp.741-754.
- Perez, E. (2005). Gloria Anzaldúa, La Gran Nueva Mestiza Theorist, Writer, Activist Scholar. *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, Vol.17 (2), Summer, pp. 1-10.
- Pérez, E. (1999). *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Phillips, M. (2014). Re-Writing Corporate Environmentalism: Ecofeminism, Corporeality and the Language of Feeling. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 09/2014, Vol. 21 (5), pp. 443–458.
- Phillips, ME., Pullen, A. and Rhodes, C. (2014). Writing Organization as Gendered Practice: Interrupting the Libidinal Economy. *Organization Studies*, Vol. 35 (3), pp.313-333.
- Phoenix, C., Smith, B., Andrew, Sparkes C. (2010). Narrative Analysis in Aging Studies: A typology for Consideration. *Journal of Aging Studies*, Vol 24 (1), pp.1-11.
- Pink, S. (2001). *Doing Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research*. London: Sage.
- Pontuale, F. (1996). The Awakening: Struggles Toward l'écriture feminine. *The Mississippi Quarterly*, Vol 50 (1), pp. 37-49.

Potgieter, F. (2003, April). Critical Language and Visual Art: A Post-Structural Analysis. *De Arte* 67, pp. 47 – 63.

Powers, J. (2007). *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. NY and Colorado: Snow Lion Publications.

Prebish Charles S. (2011). *An American Buddhist Life: Memoirs of a Modern Dharma Pioneer*. Richmond Hill, ON: Sumeru Press.

Prosser, J. (2003). Introduction. In Prosser, J. (Ed.). *Image-Based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers* (Reprinted Version). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Prosser R. (April, 1999). Processing Fictocriticism.(Review of *the space between: Australian Women Writing Fictocriticism* by Kerr, H. and Nettlebeck, A. (Eds.)) *TEXT*, Vol 3 (1). Retrieved from: <http://www.textjournal.com.au/april99/prosser.htm>.

Proudfoot, W. (1985). *Religious Experience*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Radley, A. and Taylor, D. (2003). Remembering One's Stay in Hospital: A Study in Recovery, Photography and Forgetting. *Health: An interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*, Vol 7(2). pp.129-159.

Radstone, S. (Eds).(2000). *Memory and Methodology*. Oxford, UK and NY: Berg Publishers.

Raina, M.K. (2002). Profile of Famous Educators: Sri Aurobindo ( 1872–1950). *Prospects: the Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, 32 (3), Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, pp.373-383.

- Ramazanoglu, C. and Holland, J. (2002). *Feminist Methodology: Challenge and Choices*. London, Thousands Oaks and New Delhi : Sage Publications.
- Rasheta, N. (2015). *What is Secular Buddhism?* Retrieved from:  
<https://secularbuddhism.com/what-is-secular-buddhism/>
- Reese, E. (2013). *Tell Me a Story: Sharing Stories to Enrich Your Child's World*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Rejeski, Jack W. (2008, April). Mindfulness: Reconnecting the Body and Mind in Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology. *Gerontologist*, Vol. 48(2), pp. 135–141.
- Relke, J. (2007). The Archetypal Female in Mythology and Religion: The Anima and the Mother. *European Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 3 (1). Retrieved from:  
<http://ejop.psychopen.eu/article/view/389>.
- Remy, Jana B. (2005, May). The Goddess Returns: My journey with Inanna. *Sunstone Magazine*,. Retrieved from <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/137-58-59.pdf>.
- Repetti, R. (2010). Meditation and Mental Freedom: A Buddhist Theory of Free Will. *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, Vol. 17, pp.165-112.
- Ribbens, J. and Edwards, R. (Eds.) (1998). *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research Public Knowledge and Private Lives*. London: Sage Publications.
- Richards, J. C. (2013). Exploring Education Students' Reflexivity through the Arts and Sharing My "Bricolage" Dilemmas. *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 18(44), pp.1-23. Retrieved from  
<http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol18/iss44/3>.

Richardson, L. (2004). "Writing: A Method of Inquiry." In Hesse-Biber, Sharlene N. and Leavy, P. (Eds.) *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 473-495.

Richardson, L. (2000 a). Evaluating ethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(2), pp. 253-255.

Richardson, L. (2000 b). Writing: a method of inquiry. In Norman, Denzin K. & Lincoln, Yvonna S. (Eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 923-948.

Richardson, L. (2000 c). New Writing Practices in Qualitative Research. *Sociology of Sports Journal*, Vol. 17 (1), pp. 5-20.

Richardson, L. & St. Pierre, E. (2005). Writing: A Method of Inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 959-978.

Richardson, L. & St. Pierre, E. (2005). Writing: A Method of Inquiry. In Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln Yvonna S. (Eds.). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, (pp. 959-978).

Richardson, L. (1992). "The Consequences of Poetic Representation: Writing the Other, Rewriting the Self." In Ellis, C. and Flaherty, Michael G. (Ed). *Investigating Subjectivity: Research on Lived Experience*. London: Sage. pp. 125-137.

Riessman, Catherine K. (2001). Analysis of Personal Narratives. In Gubrium J.F. and Holstein J.A. (Eds.). *Handbook of Interviewing*. Sage Publications.



Riley, T. and Hawe, P. (2005). Researching Practice: The Methodological Case for Narrative Inquiry. *Health Education Research*, Vol.20 (2) Oxford University Press, pp. 226-236.

Rinpoche, L. (1986). *Mind in Tibetan Buddhism*. (Napper. E. Trans.and Eds.). NY: Snow Lion Publications.

Rinpoche, Z. (2005, November). *Lama Zopa Rinpoche's Online Advice Book Lam-Rim Topics : Guru Devotion*. Retrieved from <http://www.lamayeshe.com/index.php?sect=article&id=340&chid=1287>.

Rinpoche, Z. (2007). The Real Chöd Practice. *Mandala Magazine*, Issue June-July, pp.34-35. Retrieved from [http://fpmt.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2007/06/the\\_real\\_chod\\_practice.pdf?x33127](http://fpmt.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2007/06/the_real_chod_practice.pdf?x33127).

Roberts, B (2011). Photographic Portraits: Narrative and Memory. [68 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(2), Art. 6. Retrieved from: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs110263>. Retrieved at 19/06/2014.

Robinson, A. (2011, July 29). In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia. *Cease fire*. Retrieved from: <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-bakhtin-1/>.

Rogers, M. (2012). Contextualizing Theories and Practices of Bricolage Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(48), pp.1-17. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol17/iss48/3>

Rohr, R. (1997). *Quest for the Grail*. NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company.

Rosdahl, J. (2010). Sculpting My Feminist Identity and Body: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Bodysculpting and Poststructuralist Feminist Fieldwork *The Australian Sociological*

Association (TASA) Annual Conference, Sydney. TASA. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.tasa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/Rosdahl-Jamilla.pdf>.

Rose, K. and Kincheloe Joe L. (2004). *Art, Culture, & Education: Artful Teaching in a Fractured Landscape*. NY: Peter Lang Publication.

Rosenberg, T. (2000). *The Reservoir: Towards a Poetic Model of Research in Design*. (Working Papers in Art and Design 1) Retrieved from: from  
[www.herts.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/12293/WPIAAD\\_vol1\\_rosenberg.pdf](http://www.herts.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/12293/WPIAAD_vol1_rosenberg.pdf)

Roy, K. (2003). *Teachers in Nomadic Spaces: Deleuze and Curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.

Ryan, M. (2014). *Space. The Living Handbook of Narratology*. Hamburg: Hamburg University.  
<http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/space>

Safran, Jeremy D. (2003). Introduction: Psychoanalysis and Buddhism as Cultural Institutions. In  
Safran, Jeremy D (Eds). *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism: An Unfolding Dialogue*. Boston:  
Wisdom Publications. •

Said, E. (1979). *Orientalism*. NY: Vintage.

Said, E. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. NY: Random House.

Said, E. (2003, 20 March). Always on Top. *London Review of Books*. Vol. 25 No. 6, pp.3-6.

Salgado. Nirmala S. (2013). *Buddhist Nuns and Gendered Practice: In Search of the Female Renunciant*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Sandelowski, M. (1991). Telling Stories: Narrative Approach to Qualitative Research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, Vol 23 (3), Fall, pp.161-166.

Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Sandrock, K. (2009). Against Monologization: The Subversive Voice of Christa Wolf's Cassandra. In Bahun-Radunović, S. and Julie Rajan, V.G. (Eds). *Word to Canvas: Appropriations of Myth in Women's Aesthetic Production*. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishers, pp.73-92.

Sarkar, M. (1967). *A Talk By The Mother On Savitri. A Report Written from Memory*. Retrieved from : <http://www.poetseers.org/the-poetseers/sri-aurobindo/savitri-by-sri-aurobindo/a-talk-by-the-mother-on-savitri/>

Sawicki, J.(1996). Feminism, Foucault, and “subjects” of power and freedom. In Hekman, Susan J. (Eds.). *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Scarles, C. (2010, October). Where Words Fail, Visuals Ignite: Opportunities for Visual Autoethnography in Tourism Research. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol 37 (4), pp.905–926.

Schaeffer, K. R. (2004). *Himalayan Hermitess : The Life of a Tibetan Buddhist Nun*. NY: Oxford University Press.

Schedneck, B (2007). Buddhist Life Stories. *Contemporary Buddhism*. 8:1. pp. 57-68.

Schneiders, Sandra M. (2005). The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline. In Elizabeth, Dreyer A. and Mark, Burrows S., (Eds). *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*. Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press, pp. 5-24.

Schinske, Huntington M. (2015). *Ani's Asylum*. Xlibris Corporation LLC.

Schleiermacher, F. (1958). *On religion: Speeches to its cultured despisers*. New York : Harper, [originally published in 1799]

Schnier, J. (1953, September). Art Symbolism and the Unconscious . *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 12 (1), Special Issue on Symbolism and Creative Imagination, pp. 67-75.

Schippers, B. (2011). *Julia Kristeva and Feminist Thought*. Edinburg University Press: Edinburg.

Schilo, A. and Sabadini, A. (2010). Transforming Viewpoints: To Mix Metaphors in the Field of Painting. *The International Journal of the Arts in Society* Vol. 5 (3), pp. 13-28.

Schilo, A. and Sabadini, A. (2011). Collaborative Viewpoints: The Writing of Impossible Descriptions. *COLLOQUY Text Theory Critique* 22, pp.261-273.

Schneider, N. (2015, Décembre). Self-Representation and Stories Told: the Life and Vicissitudes of Khandro Choechen. *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, No. 34, pp. 171-188.

Schole, C. (2017 a). The Beginning. (Surreal Digital Art). *Society 6*. Retrieved from [https://society6.com/product/the-beginning-h7d\\_print#s6-1275012p4a1v45](https://society6.com/product/the-beginning-h7d_print#s6-1275012p4a1v45).

Schole, C. (2017 b). Moon Drops. (Surreal Digital Art). *Society 6*. Retrieved from [https://society6.com/product/moondrops\\_print#s6-3768841p4a1v45](https://society6.com/product/moondrops_print#s6-3768841p4a1v45).

- Schostak J. R. (2005). *[Ad]dressing Methodologies. Tracing the Self In Significant Slips: Shadow Dancing*. (Ph D Thesis). University of East Anglia, Norwich. Retrieved from: <http://www.imaginativespaces.net/thesis/Front%20cover.pdf>.
- Schreiner, P. (2016). *The Body of Jesus: A Spatial Analysis of the Kingdom in Matthew*. NY and London: Bloomsbury.
- Schrempf, M. and Schneider, N. (2015, Décembre). Female Specialists between Autonomy and Ambivalence *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, No. 34, pp. i-viii.
- Schroeder, John W. (2004). *Skilful Means: The Heart of Buddhist Compassion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarshi Dass Publishers.
- Schutte, O. (1991). Irigaray on the Problem of Subjectivity. *Hypatia*, Vol. 6, (2), Summer, pp. 64-76.
- Seager, Richard H. (1999). *Buddhism in America*. Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Selmon, S. (1997). Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World. In Mangia, Padmini (Eds.). *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 74-83.
- Seymour, J. (2013) Feminist Standpoint Epistemology – The Role of Women in Climate Policy-Making: Are Some People's Experiences More Valuable than Others' as a Foundation for Knowledge and Generating Social Change? *Pragmatism Tomorrow*, Issue 1: No. 3.

Sels, N. (2011). Myth, Mind and Metaphor: On the Relation of Mythology and Psychoanalysis. *S (MAASTRICHT)* 4. p.56-70.

Senauke, A. and Moon, S. (1994). Interview with Sister Chan Khong. *The Turning Wheel*, Winter Issue.

Sestito, J. (2009). *Write for Your Lives: Inspire Your Creative Writing with Buddhist Wisdom*. UK : Watkins Publishing.

Sharf, R. (1993). The Zen of Japanese Nationalism." *History of Religions* 33/1. pp. 1-43.

Sharf, R. (1995). Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience. *Numen* 42.pp. 228-283.

Sharf, R. (1998). Experience. In Taylor , Mark C. (Ed). *Critical Terms in Religious Studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 99-116

Shaw, M. (1994). *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Shawn, W. (2008). *Research is Ceremony : Indigenous Research Methods*. Fernwood publishing: Halifax and Winnipeg.

Shelburne, Walter A. (1988). *Mythos and Logos in the Thought of Carl Jung: The Theory of the Collective in Scientific Perceptive*. State university of New York: Albany.

Shneiderman, S. (1999). Appropriate Treasure: Reflections on Women, Buddhism, and Cross-Cultural Exchange. In Tsomo, Leksho K. (Eds.). *Buddhist Women Across Cultures: Realizations*. USA : State University of Newyork.

- Shome, R. (1996). Postcolonial Interventions in the Rhetorical Canon: An “Other” View. *Communication Theory*, 6(1), pp. 40-59.
- Shulman, E. (2014). *Rethinking the Buddha: Early Buddhist Philosophy as Meditative Perception*. NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Shultz, J. (1975, May). Stages on the Spiritual path: A Buddhist perspective. In Tulku, T. (Eds). *Reflections of mind. Western Psychology Meets Tibetan Buddhism*. Berkeley: Dharma Publishing.
- Siegel, D.J. (2007). *The Mindful Brain*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Sigi, R. (2006). *Gurudev Ravindra Nath Tagore A Biography*. New Delhi: Diamond Pocket Books.
- Simmer- Brown, J. (2002). *Dakini's Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Buddhism*. USA: Shambala Publications.
- Simons, H.W. and Billig, M. (1994). *After Postmodernism: Reconstructing Ideology Critique*. London: Sage.
- Skinner, D., Valsiner, J. and Holland, D. (2001, September). Discerning the Dialogical Self: A Theoretical and Methodological Examination of a Nepali Adolescent's Narrative. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Volume 2, No. 3, Art. 18. Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/913/1994>
- Slattery, P. (2001). The Educational Researcher as Artist Working Within. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 7 (3), pp. 370-398.

Smart, N. (1965, October). Interpretation and Mystical Experience. *Religious Studies*, Vol. 1 (1), pp. 75-87, Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0034412500002341>.

Smart, N. (1969). *The Religious Experience of Mankind*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Smart, N. (1989). *The World's Religions*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Smith, Dorothy E. (1992). Sociology from Women's Experience: A Reaffirmation. *Sociological Theory*. Vol. 10 (1) Spring, pp. 88-98.

Smith, Gene E. (2001). *Among Tibetan Texts: History and Literature of the Himalayan Plateau*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Smith, Jonathan Z. (1982). *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies : Research and Indigenous Peoples*. New York: Zed Books.

Smithbell, P. (2010). Arts-Based Research in Education: A Review. *The Qualitative Report*. Vol. 15(6), pp.1597-1601. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-6/cahnmann.pdf>.

Soja, E. (2000). Third Space: Expanding the Scope of the Geographical Imagination. In

Read, A. (Eds.). *Architecturally Speaking: Practices of Art, Architecture and the Everyday*. London, New York: Routledge, pp. 13–30.



Solluna, S. (2016). The Feminine Spiritual Path. *taotanicarts.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.taotanicarts.com/the-feminine-spiritual-path.html>

Sosale, S. (2002). Chapter 5: The Panoptic View: A Discourse Approach to Communication and Development. In Servaes, J. (Eds.). *Approaches to Development Communication*. Paris: UNESCO.

Sosulski, Marya R.; Buchanan, Nichole T. and Donnell, Chandra M. (2010, September). Life history and Narrative Analysis: Feminist Methodologies Contextualizing Black Women's Mental Illness with Severe Mental Illness. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, Vol 37 (3), Article 4.

Soja, E.W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Blackwell Publishing: Oxford.

Sparkes, A.C and Smith, B. (2008). Narrative constructionist inquiry. In Holstein, J.A. Gubrium J.F. (Eds.). *Handbook of Constructionist Research*. London: The Guildford Press, pp. 295–314.

Spivak, G. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? In Nelson, C. and Grossberg's, L. (Eds.). *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana and Chicago : University of Illinois Press.

Spry, T. (2011). *Body, Paper, Stage: Writing and Performing Autoethnography* (E Reader Version). Left Coast Press. Retrieved from [http://sr4lp2wr3c.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx\\_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft\\_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft\\_val\\_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:book&rft.genre=book&rft.title=Body%2C+paper%2C+stage%3A+writing+and+performing+autoethnograph](http://sr4lp2wr3c.search.serialssolutions.com/?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info%3Aofi%2Fenc%3AUTF-8&rft_id=info:sid/summon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:book&rft.genre=book&rft.title=Body%2C+paper%2C+stage%3A+writing+and+performing+autoethnograph)

y&rft.au=Spry%2C+Tami&rft.date=2011-01-

01&rft.isbn=9781611327953&rft.externalDocID=R04819534&paramdict=en-US

Sri Aurbindo Society. (2015, August). Newsletter. Vol. 29 (8), Singapore. Retrieved from <http://sriarobindosociety.org.sg/printableNewsletters/August%202015%20Newsletter%20-%20Web.pdf>

Sri Aurbindo Ashram. (1999-2016). Welcome to Sri Aurbindo Ashram. Retrieved from <http://www.sriarobindoashram.org/ashram/mother/>.

Sri, Bhattacharjee G. (1991). An Outline of Sri Aurobindo's Epic Poem 'Savitri'. (A talk given by on 6th November 1988 at the Imphal University). Retrieved from: <http://www.aurobindo.ru/workings/bhattach/gopal2e.htm>.

Stables, Clifford L. (1992, January). White Male Ways of Knowing. *Postmodern Culture*. Vol. 2, (2). Retrieved from <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/27348>

Stace, W. (1960). *Mysticism and Philosophy*. London: Jeremy P. Tarcher Inc.

Steinberg, S. (2006). Critical Cultural Studies Research: Bricolage in action. In Tobin, K. & Kincheloe, J. (Eds.). *Doing Educational Research*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers. pp. 117-137.

Stephen, Ferguson II C. (2015). *Philosophy of African American Studies: Nothing Left of Blackness*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Stevens, J. (2013). *Subjectivity in Asian Children's Literature and Film: Global Theories and Implications*. UK: Routledge.

- Stevenson, I. (1977). The Explanatory Value of the Idea of Reincarnation. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, Vol. 164 (5), pp. 305-326.
- Stevenson, I. and Haraldsson, E. (2003). The Similarity of Features of Reincarnation Type Cases over Many Years: A Third Study. *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 17(2), pp. 283-289.
- Stinson, Susan W. (1994). Research as Choreography. *Research in Dance Education*, Vol. 7 (2), pp.201 – 209.
- Sturken, M. and Cartwright, L. (2001). *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford University Press: New York.
- Suh, Sharon A. (2015). *Silver Screen Buddha: Buddhism in Asian and Western Film*. London and NY : Bloomsbury.
- Sullivan, M. (1973). *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*. London:Thames and Hudson.
- Sun, C. (2004). *The Silence of the Void [manuscript] : Exploring the Visual Language of the Void from the East to the West* (Ph.D Thesis) (D.C.A.),University of Wollongong. Retrieved from <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/208/>
- Surya, Das L.(1998). *Awakening the Buddha Within*. USA : Broadway Books .
- Syverson, M. (2011). *True Beginner's Mind: Fresh Encounters with Zen*. Austin: Appamada.
- Tagore, R. (2004). *The Religion of Man: Being The Hibbert Lectures For 1930*. (Novak, P. Fwd.). Rhinebeck, New York: Monkfish Book Publishing Company, George Braziller, Inc.
- Taklha, N. L. (2001). *Born in Lhasa*. NY: Snow Lion Publications.

- Tamdgidi, M. (2005). Orientalist and Liberating Discourses of East-West Difference: Revisiting Edward Said and the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. *The Discourse of Sociological Practice*, Vol. 7, double-issues 1&2, Spring/Fall, pp. 187-201.
- Tanaka, Kenneth K. (2007). The Individual in Relation to the Sangha in American Buddhism: An Examination of ‘‘Privatized Religion’’. *Buddhist-Christian Studies* Vol 27, pp. 115-127.
- Tarnas, R. (1991). *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that have Shaped Our World View*. New York:Ballantine Books.
- Taylor, D. (2011). Introduction: Power, freedom and subjectivity. In Tayloe, D. (EdS.). *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*. Durham, UK: Acumen.
- Taylor, E. (2016) Mindfulness and Flow in Transpersonal Art Therapy: An Excavation of Creativity. In Powietrzynska, M. & Tobin, K. (Eds.). *Mindfulness and Educating Citizens for Everyday Life*. Rotterdam: The Netherlands: Sense Publishing.
- Taylor, M. (2014). Girl in a Bee Dress (Surreal Digital Art). *Society6 Art*. Retrieved from <http://www.cuded.com/2014/01/digital-art-by-maggie-taylor/>
- Taylor, Peter C. and Wallace, J. (2007). *Contemporary Qualitative Research: Exemplars for Science and Mathematics Educators*. Netherland: Springer.
- Tedlock, B. (2003). Ethnography and Ethnographic Representation. In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). *Strategies of a Qualitative Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 165-213.
- The Dalai Lama. (1998). *Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment*. USA: Thubten Dhargye Ling.
- The Dalai Lama. (2010). *Becoming Enlightened*. (Hopkins, J. Trans.). London, Sydney: Rider.

The Dalailama (2014, October 24). Eight Verses of Training the Mind & Avalokiteshvara Empowerment (Teaching given in Vancouver, BC, Canada). Retrieved from <http://www.dalailama.com/news/post/1178-eight-verses-of-training-the-mind--avalokiteshvara-empowerment>.

The Yogini Project (2014). *The Yogini Project*. Retrieved from <http://theyoginiproject.org/yoginis-her-story/wisdom-dakinis>.

Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ W. (1997, Autumn). Enactments of Power: The Politics of Performance Space. *The Drama Review (TDR)* (1988-), The MIT Press, Vol. 41 (3), , pp. 11-30.

Thomas, R. and Davies, A. (2005). Theorizing the Micro-politics of Resistance: New Public Management and Managerial Identities in the UK Public Services. *Organization Studies* 26(5), pp. 683–706.

Titus, P. (2008). From Eurocentrism to Hybridity or from Singularity to Plurality. The RoundTable, *Partium Journal of English studies*. Vol. I (1), Spring. Retrieved from:[http://www.theroundtable.ro/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=5](http://www.theroundtable.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=5).

Torchinov, E. (2003). Mysticism and Its Cultural Expression: An Inquiry into the Description of Mystical Experience and Its Ontological and Epistemological Nature. *The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, Vol. 22, pp.40-46.

Torwesten, H. (1991). *Vedanta: Heart of Hinduism*. In Rosset, L. and Phillips, J. (Trans.). NY: Grove Press.

Trahar, S. (2006). Introduction. The Contribution of Narrative research to Comparative and International Education. In Trahar, S. (Eds). *Narrative Research on Learning: Comparative and International Perspectives*. Oxford UK: Symposium Book.

Trahar, S. (2009). Beyond the Story Itself: Narrative Inquiry and Autoethnography in Intercultural Research in Higher Education [41 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol 10(1), Art. 30. Retrieved from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0901308>.

Transken, S. (2005). *Everyday Everywhere 24/7 Re-Searching our lives: Bricolage Authoethnography*. Paper prepared for the Canadian Women's Studies Association Conference, Western University, London, Ontario. May 29th – 31st 2005. Available at: [https://www.unbc.ca/sites/default/files/assets/si\\_transken/documents/bricolage\\_paper\\_may17\\_1017night.pdf](https://www.unbc.ca/sites/default/files/assets/si_transken/documents/bricolage_paper_may17_1017night.pdf).

Tsomo, Karma Lekshe. (2004). *Buddhist Women and Social Justice: Ideals, Challenges, and Achievements*. Albany: State University of New York Press,

Tsedroen, J. (Bhikshuni) (2006). 9th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women In Malashiya. *Sakyadhita (International Association for Buddhist Women) News Letter*, Vol 15. (2), pp.1-2. Retrieved from: <http://sakyadhita.org/docs/resources/newsletters/15-2-2006.pdf>.

Tsalach, C. (2013). Between Silence and Speech: Autoethnography as an Otherness-Resisting Practice. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 19(2), pp.71– 80.

Tsedroen,J. (2009, May 27). *Ordination of Buddhist Nuns:The Ice Seems to be Broken*. Retrieved from <http://thubtenchodron.org/2013/05/bhikshuni-full-ordination/>

- Tsering, T. (Geshe) (2006). *Buddhist Psychology: The Foundation of Buddhist Thought*. Mcdougall, G. (Eds.). Vol. 3. Boston: Wisdom publications.
- Tsomo, K. L. (2004). Family, Monastery and Gender Justice: Re invisioning Buddhist Institutions. In Tsomo, K. L.(Eds). *Buddhist Women and Social Justice: Ideals, Challenges, and Achievements*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Tsomo, K. L. (Eds) (1999). *Buddhist Women Across Cultures*. USA : State University of New York.
- Tsomo, K. L. (2007). Auspicious Beginnings: The Inception of Sakyadhita. *Sakyadhita Newsletter*, Vol. 16 (1). Retrieved from <http://sakyadhita.org/docs/resources/newsletters/16-1-2007.pdf>
- Tsomo, K. L. (2008). North American Buddhist Women in the International Context. In Gregory, P. N. and Mrozik, S.(Eds). *Women Practicing Buddhism: American Experiences*. Boston : Wisdom Publications.
- Tsomo, K. L. (2013, July 15). Buddhism for Women, Women for Buddhism: Change is Coming. (Lam, R. Interviewer). *Awakening Buddhist Women*. Retrieved from <http://awakeningbuddhistwomen.blogspot.com.au/2013/07/buddhism-for-women-women-for-buddhism.html>
- Ullman, R. & Reichenberg-Ullman, J. (2001). *Mystics, Masters, Saints, and Sages: Stories of Enlightenment*. Berkeley, CA: Conari Press.
- Underhill, E. (1955). *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*. New York: The Noon Day Press.

Vaughn, F. (1985). Discovering Transpersonal Identity. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Vol. 25(13), pp.13-38.

Vaughan, F. (2010). Identity, Maturity and Freedom: Transpersonal and Existential Perspectives. *Journal of Transpersonal Research*, Vol.2, pp.2-9.

Viriasova, I. (2006, December). The Problem of Freedom in the Works of Michel Foucault. *CEU Political Science Journal*, Vol. 1 (5), pp.64-77.

Wade, J. (1996). *Changes of Mind: A Holonomic Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Wall, L. (May, 2004). *Women, Distance Education and Solitude: A Feminist Postmodern Narrative of Women's Responses to Learning in Solitude* (Thesis Submitted to the Athabasca University Governing Council in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Distance Education), Athabasca University, Athabasca, Alberta. Retrieved from [auspace.athabascau.ca/bitstream/2149/568/1/wall.pdf](http://auspace.athabascau.ca/bitstream/2149/568/1/wall.pdf).

Wang, H. (2004). *The Call from the Stranger on a Journey Home: Curriculum in a Third Space*. New York: Peter Lang.

Wallace, A. (2001 a). *Buddhism with an Attitude: The Tibetan Seven-Point Mind-Training*. (Quirolo, L. Eds.). NY: Snow Lion Publications.

Wallace, A. (2001 b). Intersubjectivity in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* Vol. 8, No. 5–7, Retrieved from:  
<http://sb institute.com/sites/default/files/Intersubjectivity.pdf>



Wallace, A. (1999). The Buddhist Tradition of Samatha: Methods for Refining and Examining Consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* Vol. 6 (2-3), pp.175-187.

Wallace, A. and Hodel, B. (2008). *Embracing Mind: The Common Ground of Science and Spirituality*. Boston and London: Shambhala.

Walsh, M. (2003).(Review of Article *Irigaray and Difference: Towards a Culture of Two Subjects*) *Australian Feminist Studies*, Vol. 18 (40), pp.103-106.

Walsh, S., Bickel, B. and Leggo, C. (2015). Introduction. In Walsh, S., Bickel, B. And Leggo, C. (Eds.). *Arts-based and Contemplative Practices in Research and Teaching: Honoring the Presence*. NY: Routledge.

Wang, C. & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, Vol 24 (3), pp. 369–387.

Wangmo, S. (2015, June 23-30). Unveiling the lives of Great Master of Bhutan. Paper presented at Compassion and Social Justice: 14th International Conference on Buddhist Women, Sakyadhita, 2015 Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Ward, Sewell, D. (1992). The Descent into Hades. *Library of Halexandria*. Retrieved from <http://www.halexandria.org/dward385.htm>.

Watson, C. (2009). Picturing Validity. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 15 (3), pp. 526-544.

Watson, John H. (1973). The Religious Beliefs of Rabindranath Tagore. *The Expository Time*. Retrieved from <http://ext.sagepub.com/content/84/12/373.full.pdf>.

Webb, Mark O. (1995). Feminist Epistemology and the Extent of the Social. *Hypatia*, Vol. 10 (3), pp. 85-98.

Weber, S. (2008). Chapter 4: Visual Images in Research. In Gary, J. & Cole, Ardra L. (Eds.). *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues*, (E Reader Version) Sage Publications. Retrieved from <http://0-methods.sagepub.com.prospero.murdoch.edu.au/book/handbook-of-the-arts-in-qualitative-research>

Weiler, Hans N. (2005, April 21). Ambivalence: Contradictions in Contemporary Higher Education. Prepared for Presentation to the University Autonomy Workshop at the Open Society Institute/Central European University. Retrieved from: [http://web.stanford.edu/~weiler/Texts05/Budapest\\_CEU\\_045.pdf](http://web.stanford.edu/~weiler/Texts05/Budapest_CEU_045.pdf)

Wells, L. (1997). *Photography: A Critical Introduction*. London and NY: Routledge.

Westmarland, N. & Anderson, J. (2001). Safe at the Wheel? Security Issues for Female Taxi Drivers: Visions of a Feminine Future. *The Security Journal*, Vol. 14 (2), pp.29 – 40.

Wilber, K. (1996). *A Brief History of Everything*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.

Wilber, K. (2011 a). On the Nature of a Post-Metaphysical Spirituality : Response to Habermas and Weis. *Ken Wilber Online*, Shambhala Publication. Retrieved from <http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/misc/habermas/index.cfm/> (Retrieved 3/2/2011)

Wilber, K. (2011 b). Waves, Streams, States, and Self--A Summary of My Psychological Model.

(Or, Outline of An Integral Psychology). *Ken Wilber Online*, Shambhala Publication . Retrieved from [http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/books/psych\\_model/psych\\_model1.cfm/](http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/books/psych_model/psych_model1.cfm/) (Retrieved at 3/2/2011)

Wilber, K. (1998 a). *One Taste*. Boston USA: Shambhala Publicatons.

Wilber, K. (1998 b). *The Essential Ken Wilber: An Introductory Reader*. Boston .USA: Shambhala Publications.

Wilber, K. (1997, February). An Integral Theory of Consciousness, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 4 (1), pp. 71-92.

Wilber.K. (2000). *Integral Psychology: Conscious, Spirit, Psychology Therapy*.Boston:Shambhala Publication.

Wilber, K. (2006). *Integral Spirituality: A Starting New Role for the Religion in Modern and Postmodern World*. Boston: Integral Book.

William. J.(2010). *Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Penguin

Williams, James S. (2013). *Space and Being in Contemporary French Cinema*. UK: Mancester University Press.

Williams Kyodo A (Rev.), Owens, R. (Lama). Syedullah, J. (2016). *Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation*. North Atlantic Books.

Willis, J. D . (1987 a). Dakini: Some Comments on its Nature and Meaning. In Willis, J. D. (Eds.). *Feminine Ground : Essays on Women and Tibet*. NY: Snow Lion Publications, pp, 57-75.

Willis, J. D. (1987 b). Tibetan Ani-s: The Nun's life in Tibet. In Willis, J D. (Eds.). *Feminine Ground : Essays on Women and Tibet*. NY: Snow Lion Publications, pp.96-117.

Willis, J. (2001). *Dreaming Me: An African American Woman's Spiritual Journey*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Willis, Janice D. (2011). Anger Always Hurts Me. *Mandala*, Issues for July – September. Retrieved from <http://fpmt.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2011/06/AngerAlwaysHurtsMe.pdf>.

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is Ceremony : Indigenous Research Methods*. Fernwood Publishing: Halifax and Winnipeg.

Woldeyes, Yirga G. (2017). Native colonialism,: Education and the economy of violence against traditions in Ethiopia . London, New Delhi :The Red Sea Press. Woodhead, L. (2011). Five Concepts of Religion. *International Review of Sociology*, Vol. 21, Issue 1, pp. 121-143.

Wright, R. (2016). Buddhism and Modern Psychology (Lecture for the online course). Princeton University. Retrieved from <https://www.coursera.org/learn/science-of-meditation>

Yagelski, Robert P. (2009, October).Thousand Writers Writing: Seeking Change through the Radical Practice of Writing as a Way of Being. *English Education*, Vol. 42 (1), pp. 6-28.

Yagelski, Robert P (2011). *Writing as a Way of Being: Writing Instruction, Nonduality, and the Crisis of Sustainability*. New York: Hampton Press.

Yandell, K. (1999). *Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Yardley, A. (2008). Piecing Together—A Methodological Bricolage [25 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol 9(2), Art. 31. Retrieved from :<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0802315>.

Yeng, S. (2014). Irigaray's Alternative Buddhist Practices of the Self. *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy - Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française*, Vol. 22 (1), pp 61-75.

Yeshe, L. (1981). *Compassion and Emptiness*. (Teachings on the Yoga Method of Maitreya, Given at Maitreya Institute, Holland). Retrieved from <http://www.lamayeshe.com/article/chapter/chapter-3-compassion-and-emptiness>.

Yeshe, L. (2014). *Introduction to Tantra: The Transformation of Desire*. (Landlow, J. Compil Eds.). Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Yu Sun, C. (2004). *The Silence of the Void: Exploring the Visual Language of the Void from the East and the West* (PhD Thesis) University of Wollongong. Retrieved from <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1208&context=theses>.

Zajonc, A. (2005). *Love and Knowledge: Recovering the Heart of Learning through Contemplation*. Presented at *Contemplative Practices and Education: Making Peace in Ourselves and in the World*. Teachers College, Columbia University, February 11-13, 2005. Retrieved from

<http://www.contemplativemind.org/admin/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/zajonc-love-and-knowledge.pdf>.

Zimmerman, Larry J. (2013). On Archaeological Ethics and Letting Go. In Scarre, G. and Coningham, R. *Approaching the Past: Philosophical Perspectives on the Practice of Archaeology*. NY, Melbourne and Madrid: Cambridge University Press.

Zylinska, J. (1998). The Feminine Sublime: Between Aesthetics and Ethics. *Women: a Cultural Review* Vol. 9. No. 1, pp.97-105.

Zylinska, J. (2011). *On Spiders, Cyborgs, and Being Scared: The Feminine and the Sublime*. Manchester University Press: UK.

*This page intentionally left blank*