My Sītā: A Feminist’s Prayer
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My Sītā: A Feminist’s Prayer

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You will be lost and unlost.
Over and over again.
Relax love.
You were meant to be this

- Nayyirah Waheed
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It is said ‘it takes a village’ (to raise a child). However, I feel this is also true of any other endeavour of the heart. This thesis is a product of the loving, supporting, encouraging, empathising energies that have found their way to me over the past year.

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Thoughts on a Preface

Why are you afraid?
When it is you who have brought yourself here.

Why do you feel so misunderstood?
When you know why you are here.

Why are you so hesitant?
When you can feel,

What lies beyond

is

freedom

and

self-discovery?

- July 2016

Dear Reader,

The process of writing this thesis has been a reckoning. The ultimate expression of stillness in chaos—that of integration, not simply of the experiences that unleashed, dormant or until now, unrecognized aspects of myself, but of experiences that led to my participation in the Innsbruck Masters of Peace Programme.

Nestled in a small town in the Himalayas, the process of bringing this thesis to life has pushed, prodded and pinched me to take stock of myself in ways I thought, had been thoroughly covered (and put to rest) during the presence phase of the programme. However, as the adage goes, the programme, saves the best for last. This writing process has meant being confronted by aspects of myself that only living within the family, along with them could have triggered.
Over the past year I have gained a visceral insight into what the term a ‘labour of love’ can mean; this thesis project has made me experience an entire spectrum of emotions, and then some. However, more than anything else, this thesis has become an unequivocal expression of my acceptance and acknowledgement of the self – of myself; with all its quirks and eccentricities, depth and dimension, long pending and overdue.

It is with these words, that I invite you, dear reader, on this journey of exploring the many pieces to my peace; of my understanding of peace as a plural expression of myself, my relationships and their subsequent interplay. This is the concluding chapter of an illuminating two – year journey, which, not-so-surprisingly, and almost poetically, comes together, and begins anew in the system known as the family.
1. Introduction

A revolution may begin on the streets but is won in the system we identify as home. It is honed and polished through the everyday encounter of attitudes and behaviours permeating and therefore defining the quality and depth of our interactions with the individuals we coexist with and call our family. It is a basic system we either are or have been a part of, reluctantly or graciously, during the course of our lives. It is a system that moulds the self, in subtle and not-so-subtle ways, one that feeds it and in turn is fed by it. It is alive, breathing, changing and evolving. The smallest collective that holds the potential to bear witness to the trajectory of our lives. The attitudes and behaviours that form this self, learned within the purview of this collective, gain even more significance when we leave the nest and step out into the world at large. In the subsequent encounters, this self, cascades and collides; is subsumed or subverted; morphing anew. The family, thus, is rife with tension and tremendous potential, becoming a critical, if not the primary site— for change, transformation, growth and of course, conflict of this self.

Inadvertently, it also becomes the very node, in a very large web of interconnections, which elicits protection, from the very forces that threaten to reorganize or shake its power. In such a context, the personal or the self is (always) political. More than the parts, i.e. the individual family members, would care to admit. What does this mean though? More importantly, why is it important to the premise of this thesis, within the frame of the Innsbruck Masters of Peace Programme?

The programme at Innsbruck is unique in its approach to peace studies; it aims to “transgress the limits of conventional [and more prevalent] modern and postmodern schools of peace studies... [We are] prepared for... a very holistic – physical, emotional and intellectual – exploration of [ourselves], [our] society and, in more general terms, of
the... world. Transrational peaces, as defined in this program, twist the division between subject and object; they go beyond the conventional limits of reason; they are not only rational but also relational; they start the search for peace with the deconstruction of the observer’s identity; they apply all the methods of conventional peace studies and go much further.”¹

Bearing this in mind, it is important to note that the first-person singular, or 'I', am the critical voice in this text. I am not detached from my research and neither is my research detached from me. On the contrary, the choice and treatment of my topic is a reflection of my experiences and how they have shaped me; to push this thought even further, it is an expression of what the topic seeks to communicate through me. Within this frame, the personal is political, however, it is also so much more.

On the surface, this revolutionary slogan has been used and abused to death and resurrected, when needed, to contend with the insidious nature of patriarchy. Since its inception, it has a sound resonance, with the dynamics of the daily lives of women and men, across the globe. Much like the women, who adopted this slogan in its early years, it is alive, changing, breathing and evolving. However, encaged and beholden within the confines of a modern – postmodern academic deconstruction the slogan does little more than rankle the sensibilities of someone such as myself.

Upon reflection, and as a consequence of my journey at Innsbruck, I believe that this Masters Programme provides me, the author, with the requisite tools and frame to go beyond the aforementioned confines that threaten to stifle this radical thought, to explore its limit point, or the lack thereof. It is my belief that with every push and prod, a new path

unveils itself, in the here and now, towards a new horizon and a new discovery. Thereby, not only resuscitating, but also imbuing this slogan with deeper meaning that results in a multidimensional unfolding of the numerous other parts that comprise the whole.

So, how political is the personal? I would argue, it is not simply political, but so much more. The personal is the site where a revolution finds meaning and expression. It is the potential site of a human revolution; or a deep inner transformation; a movement towards self-knowledge, self-actualization, self-realization and self-awareness; unique to every person. Therefore, the depth to which I understand and am aware of the personal, i.e. my personal, I am able to contend with its political ramifications and put them at the service of my vocation, i.e. peace work.

The next question then becomes, what is this ‘so much more’? And how do I plan to explore it?

The answer is found in the entirety of this thesis. It is multi-layered and complex, at the same time it is simple. By engaging with and opening Sītā’s journey in the Rāmāyana to a reinterpretation, one that is reflective of and connected with my here and now, presented with the intention of discovering the layers of the personal that I deem political.

1.1. Author’s Perspective

I was born in 1987 to a young Indian couple; into an existing system; with its past stories and experiences, each potent with its own histories. Whether I choose to recognize this or not, I carry these stories, with me, some consciously and most subconsciously; they comprise an integral part of my self. They have influenced the way I was raised and continue to impact my life choices today. It would thus be naïve to disregard my personal perspective with respect to the idea that there is so much more to the slogan the personal is political.
Prior to my birth, my then 21-year-old mother, had found herself plucked from the familiar confines of her life in a small town in North India, and dropped, along with my father, to the strange and unknown freedom of Madagascar; a country my mother had never heard of prior to her marriage. Her husband had just begun his career in the Indian diplomatic corps. This was his first posting.

A vivacious young woman, my mother had (and continues to have) an insatiable zest for life. Growing up, the eldest daughter in a family of six, raised by a single-mother, had resulted in her making many life choices that compromised on her personal dreams and aspirations. Sacrificing and suppressing her hunger towards self-actualisation and realization at the altar of the greater good of the family; inadvertently supporting her mother (my grandmother) as she invested in her brothers. In hindsight, marriage was thus welcome. In one stroke my mother found herself cut loose from the confines of the family, as she had experienced it for 21 years, free to create one on her terms and conditions. A time to remould the boundaries of her self.

It was a time of revolution. A time of chaos. A time of tremendous potential.

My mother has always had a deep abiding belief in the power of prayer, it forms an integral part of her sense of self, something I believe she has passed on to me. According to my mother, in the first year of her marriage, upon learning about her pregnancy, her 22-year-old self’s ultimate act of revolution was praying for a girl child. A girl who would have the opportunity to experience life in every way she had been unable to. A girl who would accomplish everything she could not; strong, free, unfettered and the architect of her own destiny; the embodiment of my mother’s hunger for life.
1.1.1. The Awakening

I made my acquaintance with this hunger, in a very visceral and intimate manner, in 2017, during my winter term at the Innsbruck Masters of Peace Programme. Guided through the practice of Holotropic Breathwork, I came into contact with my hunger as well as my mother’s. I felt a chaotic tension between both of them; parts to a larger whole, similar but also different; when in harmony, they produced a force emanating from the centre of my body, deeply connected to my sense of self and desire to experience life; ever-changing, alive and breathing; when out of balance, they wreak havoc. Most prominently when harmonically integrated it manifests itself as the drive towards self-realisation; to understanding the world I am a part of, with the aim of finding my place and learning how to act accordingly; to digesting the millions of impulses coming at me and finding belonging.

Over the course of the past year, quite organically, I have found myself attempting to decipher this experience further in Fritz Perls’s *Ego Hunger and Aggression* (1947). The following quote by J.C. Smuts in Perls’s book provides an excellent starting point; “…The Personality, like the organism, is dependent for its continuance on a supply of sustenance, intellectual, social and suchlike, from the environment...unless properly metabolized and assimilated by the Personality, [it] may injure and even prove fatal to it. Just as organic assimilation is essential to animal growth, so intellectual, moral and social assimilation on the part of the Personality becomes the central fact in its development and self-realization” (123). In this manner, I began the process of unpacking the life experiences I

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2 This sense of personal harmony is inspired by, “Javanese ethics [where] the cosmos, in all its dimensions, represents an ordered whole. Harmony reigns when every element is in its proper place. Harmony becomes a synonym for peace; it means *damai* in *Bahasa Indonesia*...the objective of human acting is to find one’s place in the cosmos... [on a] pragmatic and...material level... [it is] about [interpreting one’s own existence. It serves as an aid to locate the confusion or the life world of experience within a manageable framework, so that one can gain control over one’s life and gain a sense of security” (Dietrich & Sützl 2006, 294).
believe significantly influenced my relationship with this hunger living inside of me and therefore my sense of self. The starting point being, the systems I had inhabited over the past 30 years of my life, attempting to understand the path my hunger had been on; her shadow aspects and her light. Depending on the system she experienced, through me, this also meant reflecting on and understanding how she had presented herself, how these experiences made her; as power or resistance; in anger or celebration; in suppression or expression. Beyond the frames of these dualities who is she?

Still an on-going process, however, by undertaking these explorations I realize how potently revolutionary such an act is; my hunger is personal, my hunger is an expression of my self, it is political, multi-layered and so much more.

1.1.2. Connecting the dots

Over the course of the first 18 years of my life, as we moved countries and continents, there was a consistent pattern to my father’s work; three years stationed abroad and two years in India. This pattern manifested in the form of an oscillating pendulum of beliefs, thoughts and attitudes from my parents; hyper vigilant and conservative in India, and super liberal and relaxed when abroad. On the surface, though ironic, in hindsight, this attitude made sense. There was an implicit mistrust in the former, a system that, from my mother’s experience, straight-jacketed women into a life fit for a “good Indian woman”; while the later presented a blank canvas of possibility. From the perspective of a teenager, these sudden changes to the rules of engagement could be, at best, described as disorienting. However, in hindsight, they were an expression of concern by a protective mother who herself was functioning out of her hero zone, most of the time, as she rewrote the rules for raising a daughter while engaged in the diversity of her
environment herself. She understood the potential for backlash. There was no room for defeat; the cost of abandoned revolutions tends to be too high.

As a person growing up in such a system, this meant a constant realignment and adaptation not only to beliefs and attitudes at home but also to values at schools, friends and the cultures of the countries we were stationed in. While the constant movement pushed me out of my comfort zone in one way or the other, the red thread was being surrounded by diversity, whether in India or abroad.

The diversities I encountered all encouraged the exploration of my hunger in one form or another; while some systems were more amenable to an overt curiosity; celebrating its light, my seeking spirit and allowing it to flourish, others demanded subtlety, eliciting its shadow aspects – centred around survival and competition. Some systems permitted a smooth digestion, i.e. an easy integration, while others were not so accommodating. The constant barrage of impulses, combined with the inability to digest or integrate many of them at times, resulted in a deep desire to find belonging.

I could argue, that while I was growing up, so where my folks. Suffice to say, my own ideas, expectations and desires for life started taking shape. This meant, the beginning of trying to make sense of the timeless question, who am I? Upon becoming part of the Innsbruck peace family, this question expanded organically, to include a second, even more simplistically complex question; if so how many? The answer to this question felt like the key to finding my place and being able to act accordingly.

1.1.3. The (re)discovery of my India

In 2005, with the hope of finding answers to the above-mentioned question, I returned to India to pursue my undergraduate degree, in an all-women’s institution. Going to India

\[3\] In its entirety the question reads: who am I, and if so, how many?
felt like returning to a source; rediscovering a multitude of ideas; alive, breathing, changing and evolving, disparate and yet flowing in unison, as a strong undercurrent in the deep psyche of the subcontinent. It was evident, that these plethora of thoughts, attitudes and beliefs, some conscious, while others subconscious, competed to survive and sought nourishment.

Living in and navigating the chaos of Delhi, on my own, while studying political science in an Indian context, in an all-female environment, tore through the infamous veil of ignorance in quite a dramatic fashion. Juxtaposed against the first 18 years of my life, I came to understand ideas of poverty, caste, class, sexuality, regionalism, to a name few, on a much larger scale, in a completely different light. It felt like joining the rebellion. The freedom of an all-women’s environment nourished a particular, very tenacious kind of hunger, one that was imbued with strength, perseverance and persistence; a reflection of the system I was inhabiting.

Functioning in the stark realm of dualities, this hunger was all about being in control and seizing power. Modernity and post-modernity toe-to-toe and disdainful of morality. The language of feminism I encountered at this juncture provided me with the arsenal I had been searching for, to congruently articulate a lot of my hunger at this point in my life. However, it didn’t do much to assuage the feeling of not-belonging, nor being entirely understood. Something was missing. I sensed that feminism, in the Indian context, had the potential of being nourished by the knowledge and wisdom pulsating in the depth of the subcontinent. I perceived a dynamic tension in-between the cracks, that existed within and without disciplines, when they would collide and come into contact, that sought exploration. Alas, what I perceived, beyond perfunctory recognition, there was very little space to engage with this old knowledge, in a scientific way. I found myself to be alone in this endeavour.
Nearing the end of my undergraduate degree I found John Paul Lederach’s *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (2005), (or it found me) and something, organically fell into place. I had discovered the world of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. However, maybe it was the lack of belief in my own intuition or the overwhelming doubt of an out-of-place 21-year-old, I decided not to trust this ‘aha-moment’, choosing instead, to spend the next eight years working on a wide range of issues, across a cross-section of organisations, in the development sector in India, attempting to find that something outside myself. However, Lederach’s words stayed with me. Gently cajoling the dormant peacemaker within me towards finding the art in her vocation. He writes,

> I don’t see finding the art of the matter as a minor corrective to an otherwise healthy system. It requires a worldview shift. I will propose that, as conflict professionals, we must go well beyond a sideshow, well beyond lip service to attain the art and soul of constructive change. We must envision our work as a creative act, more akin to the artistic endeavour than the technical process. This never negates skill and technique. But it does suggest that the wellspring, the source that gives life, is not found in the supporting scaffolding, the detailed knowledge of substance and process, nor that paraphernalia that accompanies any professional endeavour, be it artistic, political, economic or social. The wellspring lies in our moral imagination, *which I will define as the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist* (Lederach 2005, ix).

It is quite plausible I found myself attracted to the idea of discovering the moral imagination of the feminist within me; a quest towards unfolding myself and my place
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anew, through the art and soul of the work I undertook. A personal rooted in the challenges of the real world yet actively seeking to push the limits of the political.

During this time, through the work I did, the distances I travelled, within India, and the people I met and engaged with, in the various contexts in which they lived, the need to digest or integrate hunger, in order to belong, stood out as a recurrent theme. In hindsight, however it would seem, that it was my need to integrate my hunger, in order to belong, that was being constantly reflected back at me by my environment. Each encounter, on the field, or with colleagues or friends seemed to whisper the question, who are you? And honestly, what do you want? Constantly challenging the limits of the personal. In rebellion on multiple fronts; at work, in the field or in the city resulted in the personal being left exhausted, angry, lonely, unheard and frankly, lost.

In 2010, the opportunity for exploring my moral imagination manifested itself in the form of Nichiren Buddhism, as propagated by the Soka Gakkai International (SGI). I was presented with a chance to transform the personal from waging a constant battle of resistance towards languaging it within the frame of dependant origination. In the midst of feeling wounded, the SGI became a source and space of healing for me. Looking back, unknowingly, it became the avenue through which I began rewriting my relationship with how I had experienced my hunger passively thus far, within the Indian context, allowing it to be manipulated and exploited by my environment, to becoming actively aware of it and how I wanted to experience it and channelize it. As Daisaku Ikeda, President of the SGI writes;

[...] from a psychological perspective, earthly desires, which Buddhism regards as the cause of suffering, stand in stark contrast to bodhi, or the enlightenment of the Buddha. That is why early Buddhism taught that enlightenment can only be gained by extinguishing earthly desires. Mahayana Buddhism, however, ultimately views
enlightenment and desire as inseparable, in a relationship described as “two but not two.” It treats them as mutually inclusive aspects of the same reality. Though one may speak of desires and illusions, they originate from the essential nature of life itself, or the Dharma nature, and in that sense, are no different from enlightenment (Soka Gakkai 2009, viii).

In this way, I found myself on a path of resetting my connection with India, on my own terms. Just like Buddhism was making its way back from the Land of Sun to the Land of the Moon, so was I.

Myriad expressions of prayer are brought to life on the Indian subcontinent every day. Religion maybe a currency, but prayer is an expression of the self’s hunger to realize parts of itself it intuitively yearns for but is not quite sure how to realize. That said, the philosophy through which I choose to articulate my prayer is a personal and political act. It is an expression of a part of myself that I cannot yet fathom and yet seek to realize. The awareness with which I am able to articulate this prayer is political. Buddhism, in the realm of the SGI, provided me with a frame, through which I was able to reconcile, amalgamate, and even let go of parts of my self that no longer served me. Furthermore, unlike the many life philosophies and religions I had encountered prior to this, it clearly recognized women and their hunger towards self-realization as an expression of enlightenment. For a philosophy, that finds its roots in the thirteenth century, I found this to be radical. Much like myself, I realized, many other women had found the organisation at a time of struggle in their life. These women stood strong, cognizant of their aspirations and desires, however not in aggression but in compassion; i.e. not in rebellion. The practice and the support system provided them with the frame to bring their earthly desires into the light. To celebrate their hunger for life. The continued process of understanding and imbibing Buddhism on a daily basis provides me the space to start
digging into the personal. Practicing Buddhism is an intensely personal and political act for me. Furthermore, it is my practice that adds depth to the personal and provides nuance to the political. Allowing me to practice feminism in a manner that is unique to me; grounded in the challenges of the everyday world, in awareness of my personal, striving towards unearthing my life’s unlimited potential in connection and resonance with the context I choose to inhabit in the here and now. It is through my practice I began the journey of bringing my hunger into the light, integrating it and finding belonging in my own five-foot body first, realising that such an act, quite organically translates into finding belonging outside.

1.1.4. Coming full circle

To paraphrase and slightly amend the Preamble\(^4\) of UNESCO’s Constitution, since wars begin in the minds of human beings, it is in the minds of human beings that offences for peace must be constructed. In a similar vein, Nichiren argues, “become the master of your mind rather than let your mind master you.” (SGI 1999, 502) That is to argue, contrary to what the UNESCO preamble states, the personal cannot afford to erect defences for peace, it must, in complete awareness of its self, take the offensive stand of waging peace. From where I stand, waging peace is an expression of my feminism, it means recognizing my hunger as an expression of my potential and the realization of it as an acknowledgement of my inherent dignity as a human, i.e. my right to live a fulfilling life. As mentioned earlier, this thesis provides me with the opportunity to explore the layers of my personal and the extent to which it is galvanized by my hunger; how does satisfying this hunger facilitate my belonging, in my body and therefore my surroundings; how does the act of digesting

\(^4\)The original document reads as follows; “...That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed...” (UNESCO 2014, 5)
my hunger, in turn feed a system that is currently, overwhelmingly, designed to suppress and/or manipulate it.

Furthermore, from my perspective, given the ethno-political context in which I am choosing to give this thesis life, the myth of Sītā, within the Rāmāyana, provides an ideal entry point to explore the plurality of peaces as an intersection at which, psychology, philosophy, spirituality, and religion come into contact, converge, collide and are born anew.

1.2. Research Landscape

The diversity of India is a manifest fact, with its fourteen major language groups and hundreds of dialects, with its racial and caste diversity, its tribal, [ethno-political], and regional diversity, and its rich and complex religious life. It is not surprising that this surfeit of diversity has provided the fuel for conflict over the centuries...In temporal terms, [Nehru] saw in India, through the centuries, “an ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously.” It is this very complexity that has made India more than a culture, but rather a civilization in which cultures have mingled (Eck 2012, 44).

The very idea of India is grounded in plural collectives. The scale at which thoughts, ideas, emotions, histories and spiritualties of these collectives, converge, collide and are reborn, on this geography, has been, is and will continue to be, unprecedented. Unsurprisingly, this very reality, continuously provides potent fodder for the disparate and discordant hunger it elicits, and produces, as a group, and subsequently, through the individuals, who comprise these collectives, simultaneously. I argue, therefore, the interdisciplinary nature
of conflict, and therefore conflict transformation, provides possibly, the most appropriate frame through which to explore a woman's hunger in India.

The grand project of a post-colonial modern India, is only seventy-one years young. Colonial rule gave way to a nation state quite comfortable with supressing, and even eradicating, its spiritual roots at the altar of modern-day development. “Newly independent India was divided not just along ethnic lines but also between diametrically opposite visions of the future. Gandhians envisioned a spiritual and rural India of handloom weavers. Followers of Nehru saw Soviet-style central planning and a landscape dotted with dams and steel plants” (Nasar 2011, 454). Such an approach resulted in exacerbating imbalances; especially between what was perceived to be scientific, modern and forward-looking and what was seen as spiritual, primitive and backward. Newly independent and hungry to prove itself, modern India gradually found itself beholden to the frenzy of a patriarchal market economy, propelled by competition (as appose to cooperation), uncertain about the means through which to provide and create opportunities at scale for its inhabitants⁵, resulting in an aggression that gradually acquired a centrifugal character – a reality which had been set in motion at the time of Partition itself. Over the course of the past seven decades, the laws of demand and supply have systematically nourished a physiological, psychological and spiritual starvation and

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⁵ As Seyla Benhabib argues in her book *The Rights of Others Aliens, Residents, and Citizens* (2004) “...The modern nation-state has regulated membership in terms of one principal category: national citizenship. We have entered an era when state sovereignty has been frayed and the institution of national citizenship has been disaggregated or unbundled into diverse elements. New modalities have emerged, with the result that the boundaries of the political community, as defined by the nation-state system are no longer adequate to regulate membership.” (Benhabib 2004, 1) Keeping this in mind, the term *inhabitant* is used deliberately in lieu of *citizen*. This is a conscious decision on my part, to take cognisance of the Partition of India on the one hand, and given that the term *citizen*, and therefore citizenship is intrinsically woven into the politics of the nation state; who (the individual or collective) it deems worthy of membership into its framework and on what terms, on the other. Furthermore, it also implies, on the part of its citizens, an implicit acceptance or acquiescence of the nation state's politics, unless stated otherwise. This is me stating otherwise. Inhabitant, for the purposes of this thesis, implies a person living in a specific context, who may or may not be classified as a citizen; who is however, in a give and take relationship with the system she is living in.
depravation on various levels; what emanates, as a result, is profound suffering and an aggressive survival instinct, which further perpetuates an imbalance of power and fosters violence, structural and cultural (Galtung 1990), plaguing its inhabitants, however they are defined; by region, religion, caste, class, gender, sexuality or ethno-politically⁶. India, as a nation state, with its current boundaries and borders, is a colonial legacy; only seventy-one years old, an infant in the lifetime of a nation, suffering from the after-effects of post-colonialism, perennially self-conscious and playing catch-up, this nation state seems to not know how to find its place, and therefore, cannot act accordingly. Such a sense of displacement, tends to express itself quite boldly, as a nameless transaction (Mani 2009), between the land and its inhabitants, in a collective and individual manner.

In such a context, is there a difference in how hunger and displacement is experienced on a collective and individual level? How does one influence the other, or vice versa, if at all? Like an onion, the route to the crux of the matter is layered.

First and foremost, as is evident from the explanation above, this research is situated within the collective defined as a post-modern India. The aim is to ascertain what that means, with respect to facilitating the integration of the hunger felt by its inhabitants. The next layer concerns itself with exploring the manner in which the deep (old) knowledge that preceded the creation of India, as a nation state, and the identification of Hinduism⁷ as a “sanitised, codified and caste-ridden” (Mani 2016, 8) religion connects with this post-modern identity. Such an approach requires me to take cognisance of, while

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⁶ Since India’s recent record of fast economic growth is often celebrated…it is extremely important to point to the fact that the societal reach of economic progress in India has been remarkably limited…while India has been overtaking other countries in the progress of its real income, it has been overtaken in terms of social indicators by many of these countries, even within the region of South Asia itself. (Dreze and Sen 2013, 8)

⁷ “Though the term ‘Hindu’, denoting those who lived in the subcontinent, beyond the Indus river, was known to the Greek historian Herodotus in the fifth century BCE, ‘Hinduism’ only entered the historical record around Shankara’s time. It was a name used by Arabs who were attempting to describe the different religious strands that they encountered in India” (Khilnani 2016, 59).
simultaneously move beyond, the categorization of individuals based on their collective identities, namely defined by their region, religion, caste, class, gender, and sexuality. As Wolfgang Dietrich (2012) states,

[the] liberation from modernity’s rigid guiding principles by means of its own reason constitutes the qualitative moment that the prefix post- describes. Postmodernity thus ends where rationality hits upon the limits of its limits; yet the topic [is] not...a modern turn back into premodern approaches of alchemy, magic and myth, but much rather the question of which fields are opened up for peace research when surpassing the limits of a truly twisted modernity (210).

I feel it is important to state here, that I am in no way attempting to romanticize the civilizational history of the subcontinent, nor am I suggesting we disregard its post-colonial discourse. On the contrary, it is because of this discourse, the structures it has challenged and arguably, remoulded, that I am even able to conceive of and propose this thesis.

What I am suggesting is a “conscious overstepping of the limits of reason... [where we recognize the] Indian [energetic traditions as] free from mechanistic perceptions, [and not] qualified as modern nor postmodern and least of all premodern. At best, they can be perceived as *unmodern* (emphasis added) in the sense of not being obliged to or touched by modernity.” (Dietrich 2012, 211) I propose the curiosity, or the moral imagination, of exposing feminism, and specifically, the slogan, the personal is political to these unmodern ideas, by engaging with the myth of Sītā and her journey from a different perspective.

Why? Because, based on my lived experiences, I sense Sītā to be seeking a new storyteller, and feel her to be deeply connected, and critical, to the process of digesting (or integrating) the manner in which I experience my hunger when situated in India;
specifically, understanding what it means to identify myself as a feminist, cognizant of my spirituality in the Indian context. The adaptation of such a line of inquiry creates an opening (or opportunity) to explore a new dimension of my personal in relation to my political; i.e., the degree to which this personal is harmonized by the characteristics of the self, as espoused by Indian energetic traditions; an approach that attempts to leverage the creative tension resulting from the spiritual relationship between the individual and the collective towards conflict transformation and peacebuilding. This, I believe is the creative act or the moral imagination that carries the potential of deepening and radicalizing how feminism is experienced in the Indian context today.

1.2.1. Hunger and the Hungry

Life seeks nourishment, fodder, in order to flourish or survive. The form in which it manifests itself depends on the context. If viewed from the perspective of a seed, hunger manifests itself from the moment it is planted, deep within the earth. This seed seeks nourishment, in the form of sunlight and water. Its struggle is to break the ground, defying gravity and moving towards becoming its manifest self. At the same time, it digs down deeper, sinking its roots further, into the earth, where it finds belonging, a source from where it draws the strength to grow. Such a journey is possible only if the system is functioning in balance, i.e. to say all crucial factors contributing to the growth of the plant remain consistent – its hunger appropriately satisfied, it bursts forth. What happens when it is not? What happens when a seed is deprived of appropriate nutrition or, conversely if it is given too much? Too little or too much, the result is the same, an aggravated expression of hunger. In the case of the plant, it leads to either no growth, stunted growth or excessive growth.
From an anthropological perspective, the situation becomes a little more complicated, demonstrating an intellectual quality in addition to an emotional and somatic one. Not surprisingly, the resulting imbalances also occur on all three levels one affecting the other, mutually inclusive and systemic.

Hunger and peace share some similarities, to quote Francisco Muñoz (2006), “[one] of our greatest advantages is that [hunger] can be felt, perceived and contemplated from many different points, spaces and ambits. Indeed, from religious people to political activists, as well as all kinds of altruists and philanthropists, NGO volunteers, peace researchers, political leaders, groups and people, cultures etc., nearly all have a concept of [hunger] based on different experiences and acquired in different ways” (as found in Dietrich, Alvarez and Koppensteiner 2006, 241). Unfortunately, more often than not, especially in the world of development politics, the term ‘hunger’ is used as an adjective of negation to describe the human condition; a condition that must be alleviated or avoided; a condition that is perceived to be an affront to human dignity. However, as mentioned earlier, all living beings experience hunger; or the drive towards finding nourishment in order to grow. This desire towards growth, much like the desire towards peace, can be described as emotional, physical or intellectual in nature, as experienced by an individual or a collective. More often than not, the former tends to be at odds with the latter. What is interesting is, depending on the context, namely, the power dynamics, hunger acquires a moral persona; it is perceived as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’, depending on who is feeling the hunger, or who is feeding it and the kind of hunger that is being felt or fed. The ‘who’ is defined by the inter-play of regional, religious, caste, class, gender, sexuality, or ethno-political identities of individuals and the collectives. While the moral nature of the hunger instinct is defined by the power dynamics at play within and between these identities.
It is a well-experienced phenomenon that the tension which exists between the collective and the individual comes alive vividly through the everyday lives of women and men, across the globe. The collective, in its diverse avatars, as the nation-state, the community or the family, takes a particular interest in prescribing gender normative behaviours and patterns. These collectives aim to establish appropriate or “correct” forms of hunger; encroaching on the political space and systematically stifling the personal. Such transgressions elicit the question; what is the extent to which women and men are permitted to explore their personal; i.e. who they are, beyond the categories of region, religion, caste, class, sexuality, ethnicity and yes, even gender? Furthermore, what is the extent to which they are able to freely explore the perceived limits of their human experience? And, what ramifications does the exploration of these limits have on their daily lives?

In January 2013, following the gang rape of a young Indian woman in Delhi, the Justice Verma Committee stated in its report, “[it] is an admitted fact that women in India suffer in various aspects of life and physical health, mental well-being, bodily integrity and safety, social relations, political empowerment, education and knowledge, domestic work and non-market care, paid work and other projects, shelter and environment, mobility, leisure activities, time autonomy, respect, religion and…self-esteem / self-autonomy.” (Verma, Seth and Subramanium 2013, 10)

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9 “On December 23, 2012 a three-member Committee headed by Justice J.S. Verma, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, was constituted to recommend amendments to the Criminal Law so as to provide for quicker trial and enhanced punishment for criminals accused of committing sexual assault against women. The other members on the Committee were Justice Leila Seth, former judge of the High Court and Gopal Subramanium, former Solicitor General of India. The Committee submitted its report on January 23, 2013. It made recommendations on laws related to rape, sexual harassment, trafficking, child sexual abuse, medical examination of victims, police, electoral and educational reforms.” (Kalra 2013)
In a similar vein, activist Gautam Bhan contends, “[we] have to give men a language in which they can talk about and understand themselves in different and *individually* [emphasis added] unique ways, and break the inevitable associations we have with traditional, patriarchal, heterosexual masculinity. We need this to free men in their friendships and relationships with each other and with women” (Roy 2007). In other words, patriarchy results in perennially hungry women and men, systematically denied agency to nourish their lives, on their own terms; towards acknowledging and manifesting their full potential; the politics of scarcity play a sacred role in how hunger is *allowed* to be experienced by those inhabiting this system. An unbalanced system is a prerequisite for the smooth functioning of such a scheme; predicated on perpetuating inequity, which, inevitably, results in diverse, but unhealthy expressions of hunger.

‘Patriarchy’...is... understood more as a distinct system of control [the powerful] have over [a person’s] labour, fertility, sexuality and mobility in the family, workplace and society in general. Patriarchy as a system operates both at the ideological and material levels. It interacts with the relations of production and transforms itself accordingly to benefit...the capitalist system...Patriarchy reproduces itself in numerous ways through different relationships and institutions to maintain a [systemic] inequality between the sexes. (Shah and Gandhi 1993)

Within the boundaries of the family system, in the Indian context, I ask, what are the ways in which a skewed hunger instinct, grounded in scarcity and inequity, makes itself known? Once again, there are layers to this landscape.

On an emotional level, how I experience and view my body is influenced to a large extent by the manner in which my family sets up the scaffolding, in how I am introduced to it. Is it a meeting in celebration or shame? To be hidden or shown? With jubilation or
sadness? As you can realize, even before language begins to present itself as a viable tool for expression, feelings already begin to surface in how I experience the world, and quite significantly, in this context, how the world experiences me. For example, “[the] use of a daughter symbol appears especially significant because it [moves] into a new kind of self-exploration, starting from childhood itself...contemporary [Indian] feminists have emphasized the pain and helplessness of being born a girl; the shock of puberty and the associated development of sexual fear; the terrible rejection of being ‘sent away’ at marriage; loneliness and loss of the self after marriage; and a repetition of the entire cycle of pain, fear and rejection through the birth of another daughter.” (Kumar 1993, 2) With the passage of time, how do these feelings compound? What are the emotions they come together to nourish? What is the kind of hunger they nurture? Do I, as a woman, have the space to celebrate my existence by consciously being aware of the inherent dignity of my life, or am I starving to simply be acknowledged?

On a somatic level, obesity and malnutrition are expressions of the same broken system. One implies an excess, while the other an acute scarcity, resting at the extremes of the spectrum. (Patel 2007) In the Indian context, it is also gendered; if I am a boy I am fed first, I am given more (and if possible, better) food in comparison to my female counterpart. Arguably, somatic hunger can also acquire a different character depending on the socioeconomic class it is manifesting in. On the one hand, for example, in an upper middle-class context, where basic physiological and security needs have been met, there is a ‘correct’ body to aspire to, not necessarily grounded in a healthy image of itself. Unforgiving pressures of the collective result in the hunger for this ‘perfect’ body, with its societally approved predefined dimensions, which, in extreme cases, results in instances

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10 Maslow’s hierarchy of needs; refer to appendix 1(b) for a visual representation
of anorexia and bulimia on one end and once again, obesity on another. On the other hand, in a rural context,

[too] often, poverty and deprivation get covered as events. That is, when some disaster strikes, when people die. Yet, poverty is about much more than starvation deaths or near famine conditions. It is the sum total of a multiplicity of factors. The weightage of some of these varies from region to region, society to society, culture to culture. But at the core is a fairly compact number of factors. They include not just income and calorie intake. Land, health, education, literacy, infant mortality rates and life expectancy are also some of them. Debt, assets, irrigation, drinking water, sanitation and jobs count too (Sainath 1996, ix).

Questions surrounding our identity, how we are defined and how we perceive ourselves, by virtue of where we are born within the socioeconomic-political hierarchy, can be highlighted, to a large extent as a cerebral exercise. Larger discourses on region, religion, caste, class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity find fruition on this level. ‘Man-made’ labels, which aim to compartmentalize, and attempt to bring ‘order’ to the act of living, which, on a skeletal level, is ultimately perceived to be chaotic.

Effectively, these are labels that exist in dualities; in power and resistance, locked in a perpetual, irreconcilable, tug-of-war between the individual’s drive towards self-actualization versus the expectations of the collective. This constant push and pull, and the effects it generates define our human existence. A human being’s hunger or need for growth is thus a force that can be harnessed and nourished or manipulated and exploited.

1.2.2. Spiritual Homelessness

Beyond the purview of the more tangible aspects of hunger mentioned above, lies a fourth more ephemeral hunger, that is brought to life through the act of prayer. This hunger, is a
powerful yearning particular to the human species. It is intuitive in nature, the truth of it is simultaneously unique to the individual's lived experience while being an expression of the larger collective which the individual inhabits. Religion is the institutionalization of prayer. More often than not, the individual's actualisation of her prayer requires the collective's acquiescence. For example, an individual's search for romantic love culminates in, and almost requires, its sanctification through the institution of marriage. It is the limiting of a human being's intuitive drive towards self-actualization within the frames and boundaries of morality; in other words, that which is deemed "correct" or "appropriate" by the collective, i.e. the priest or the pundit. Krishnamurti opines,

[for] me, revolution is synonymous with religion, I do not mean by the word 'revolution' immediate economic or social change; I mean a revolution in consciousness itself. All other forms of revolution, whether Communist, Capitalist or what you will, are merely reactionary. A revolution in the mind, which means the complete destruction of what has been, so that the mind is capable of seeing what is true without distortion, without illusion – that is the way of religion (Krishnamurti 2013, 111-112).

In my opinion what Krishnamurti describes as religion is actually, spirituality. Contrary to Krishnamurti, religion, by its very definition, is structured to perpetuate a psychological imbalance of power, in favour of the priest in relation to his congregation; between the person who is able to read and understand scripture and who is not. Resulting in the aggregation of tremendous power over how people lead their lives, the decisions they make, and ultimately the actions that deem them as "good" human beings, in the hands of one, or a very small group of individuals, who, let's face it, tend to be men. By its very constitution, religion forces the individual to seek the divine outside him or
herself. It frowns upon her for exploring the possibility of the divine within; of discovering belonging within her five-foot-eight-inch body.

Unsurprisingly, within the North Indian context this has meant giving the power of moral judgement to the upper-class, heterosexual Brahmin man. As I have mentioned before, given the civilizational nature of India’s histories, religion is woven into the very fabric of life on the subcontinent, it is as inseparable as the human need to breathe. Consequently, and unsurprisingly, it is also one of the most contentious sites within India’s democracy – everyone has a relationship with, and therefore opinion on, religion. The tension that exists not only between religions, but even within them is symptomatic of the post-modern condition India finds itself in; there is a constant tussle between the need of the collective to exert influence, wield power and define how the individual should perceive the divine; and the need of the individual to establish a personal relationship, if at all, with the divine, which is sacred to her.

For the purpose of this thesis I am limiting the research landscape to my experiences with Hinduism, specifically within the geography of North India.

From the perspective of India’s post-colonial identity, as the world slept, India awoke to the weight of freedom. In hindsight, we emerged broken, on a much deeper level, where the tighter we held on to the idea of independence, the faster upholding and respecting the dignity of human life seemingly to slipped through our fingers. Along with the light of freedom came the shadow of Partition, replete with deep mistrust, within and across religions. This mistrust reached its pinnacle during the 1980s and 1990s.\footnote{\textsuperscript{11} “Using the 1931 and 1951 population census data we find that by 1951, within four years after Partition, 14.5 million people had migrated into India, Pakistan, and what later became Bangladesh. While outflows are not directly reported, we...estimate total outflows of 17.9 million people during the same period. This suggests there were 3.4 million people “missing” or unaccounted for during Partition” (Bharadwaj, Khwaja and Mian 2008, 40).}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{12} Since its independence in 1947, the Indian nation-state has, and continues to experience, conflicts of an intra and inter-state variety. The last seventy-one years can be described as an ebb and flow of small, and
creating fissures which permitted right-wing Hindu Nationalism or Hindutva to find its way to the surface. "The Congress party, India’s key integrative political institution since 1947, went [and continues to go] through a profound organizational decay, with no centrist parties taking its place. And [today] secularism, the ideological mainstay of a multi-religious India, [looks] pale and exhausted. Claiming to rebuild the nation, Hindu nationalists [have presented] themselves as [a legitimate] institutional and ideological alternative” (Varshney 2013, 100). Hindutva claims to represent the majority of the Indian population, which, according to the 2011 Census is 80 percent Hindu\textsuperscript{13}. “The multiple identities within this category, of caste, sect, region, gender, class or belief are sought to be erased, and the organized forces of Hindutva arrogate to themselves a proprietorial right to define what Hinduism means. Thus, old temples can be destroyed...[And] the community, further, is then elided into the country and nation, the Hindu Rashtra (Basu et al. 1993, 1-2).”

Quite obviously, a woman’s body does not exist in isolation of this context; i.e. her region, class, caste, religion, sexuality, gender and ethnicity. Her very conception, is viewed as a liability. Even before she enters the world, limits to her very existence are established. It is this right-wing Hinduism that determines how her body is perceived by individuals, both men and women, of not only of her social milieu, but also those who are situated above or below her in the social hierarchy. Furthermore, beyond the matter of perception, the symbolic nature of a woman’s body, within Brahmanical patriarchy

acquires significance; from the perspective of labour, within an agricultural context, for example, the body of a labourer’s wife is the site upon which psycho-social subjugation is ensured by the landlord. In other words, by virtue of the power dynamics, the wife’s body is seen as the property of the landlord (an upper-caste, upper-class man), before that of the labourer’s (his social inferior), and an indirect vehicle through which the landlord establishes his superiority. On the other hand, the body of an upper-caste Hindu woman is the site of honour, not only of her husband (the landlord) but of her entire community. She is perceived as the ‘prize’ that the lower caste men allegedly desire and want to dishonour. A woman’s very existence is governed by the politics of fear, implying that if the inherent psychological discourse, is not enough to curb a woman’s needs, wants and desires, then bodily harm (in the form of rape, more often than not) is seen as a final, and often, just recourse to stem her freedom. Furthermore, the family takes centre stage and a woman’s life is categorized into three stages: childhood, married life, and widowhood with injustice and oppression getting worse at every stage (Sangari and Vaid 1989, 90).

Within this mayhem of competing pluralities, where does a person find the space to discover what lies within? To even conceive of exploring the idea of finding belonging within, when externally, she is being pulled in a million directions all at once? Feminism, quite organically acquires a reactionary tone, of setting limits and aggressively guarding them. Spirituality is suppressed and eventually lost in the structural violence of this kind of Hinduism. The goal is achieved. To paraphrase Marx, religion really does become the opium of the masses; instead of igniting a human revolution, it numbs it into exhaustion.

1.2.3. The Rāmāyanas: Contesting the Singular Narrative

The Rāmāyana is quite literally the journey of Rām, the heir apparent of the Raghu Clan; the Sanskrit version of the epic was authored by the sage Vālmīki, in the form of a poem.
To say the epic is old, is a bit of an understatement, “[indeed] it displays evidence of the world of north India prior [emphasis added] to the rise of Buddhism, probably before the sixth century B.C.E.” (Eck 2012, 399). It is an epic poem, written by a man, in praise of the ideal man. “Whatever was good in the world was embodied in [Rām], and it was to present this ideal to the world that [Vālmīki] wrote the [Rāmāyana]. As [Rām] is the ideal man, so is Sīta the ideal woman. In fact, the whole [Rāmāyana] is filled with idealised characters – the ideal brother, the ideal servant, ideal subjects, even ideal villains” (Karve 2007, 74). By using the term ‘ideal’ Karve implies the good, pious and dutiful keeper of the Raghu clan. It is this imagery of the ideal man, with his ideal wife, governing his ideal subjects that has ultimately been usurped by the Hindutva ideology and projected, quite violently, across the Indian nation-state, as a singular narrative of the ‘ideal Hindu’. Which, essentially implies, a Brahmanical Patriarchy.

However, because there is no one India, there can be no one Rāmāyana. As A.K. Ramanujan stated thirty years ago, in a Conference on Comparison of Civilizations at the University of Pittsburgh;

The number of Rāmāyanas and the range of their influence in South and Southeast Asia over the past twenty-five hundred years or more are astonishing. Just a list of languages in which the Rāma story is found makes one gasp...to say nothing of Western languages. Through the centuries, some of these languages have hosted more than one telling of the Rāma story. Sanskrit alone contains some twenty-five or more tellings belonging to various narrative genres...If we add plays, dance-dramas, and other performances, in both the classical and folk traditions, the number of Rāmāyanas grows even larger. To these must be added sculpture and bas-reliefs, mask plays, puppet plays and shadow plays, in all the many South and Southeast Asian cultures [...] (Dharwadker 2004, 133).
It can be argued, that the plural renditions of the Rāmāyana are quite simply an affirmation of the multiplicity of truths that cohabit this geography. Furthermore, because there is no one Rāmāyana, there is no one Rām and therefore, no one Sītā. This is the opening that I choose utilise to put forward the story of my Sītā.

As Gabriele Dietrich opines,

[...] women, due to their position in society, have rarely been in the forefront of...religious [or spiritual] ideological production; women have rarely been theologians...It is, therefore, not surprising if the domain of religious reform [and spirituality] has normally remained controlled by enlightened male intellectuals who, at times, could have been creative enough to rethink women’s position in their respective religions. The question is to what extent women actively need to intervene in religious [or spiritual] ideological production (Dietrich 2008, 509).

On one level, it is my hope to do so through this thesis.

1.2.4. Re-visioning Sītās

“In the words of [Adrienne] Rich, ‘Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for us [women] more than a chapter in cultural history, it is an act of survival’ (as quoted in Volga 2016, 107). I contend, it is much more than survival. The act of spiritual re-visioning is, on a fundamental level, a political act of unfolding, and therefore requires the voicing of the realizations that well forth as a result of enacting this drama. Furthermore, such an unfolding galvanizes my moral imagination, to “imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist” (Lederach 2005, ix).
Through the process of this thesis I re-vision Sītā’s journey. I choose to practise feminism in awareness, by sharing how I imagine her journey. Recognising Sītā as an expression of the divine feminine, of Shaktī; the very force that breathes life into cosmos. This is not the story of a ‘goddess as fit consort’, this is the story of a woman’s “uncompromising nature, her fierce love and compassion, her embodiment of the tragedy and potentiality of the human journey... uncontainable within any [emphasis added] socially sanctified religious system” (Mani 2016, 8).

This is the journey of my Sītā; a feminist’s prayer.

1.3. Research Question

By adopting the following line of reasoning:

- if I am aware of my hunger, I can understand it;
- if I am able to understand it, I can digest (integrate) it;
- if I am able to integrate it, I can find belonging within myself and therefore, be in harmony with my environment in the here and now.

I attempt to answer the following question:

- how does a woman’s spiritual awareness elicit a deeper, clearer, understanding of her hunger instinct, thereby harmonizing her feminism, and facilitating belonging, in the here and now?

By doing so, I aim to understand the impact on:

- The manner in which I experience, digest and integrate the slogan, ‘the personal is political’,
- And finally, how, a feminism, nourished by spirituality, contributes to the art and soul of peace work?
1.4. Research Methodology – A Transrational Worldview

Once again, given the sheer plurality of the human experience in India, a research exploration located within this context, cannot be adequately addressed through the prism of a single discipline. In my opinion, it requires the application of an interdisciplinary approach, which the field of peace studies, in the form of elicitive conflict transformation and peacebuilding, provides.

However, as I have mentioned earlier, contrary to prevalent research norms, this research exploration has an active connection with the researcher (i.e. me) standing at the centre of the inquiry; which means, finding the answer to the aforementioned research question is personal to me. Such a stance, with respect to my research, necessitates a worldview, where I, the researcher, am perceived as a resource (of knowledge) in relation to my topic, as much as the topic is a repository of knowledge, in and of itself. By acknowledging this relational quality, between the researcher and researched, the personal, in my opinion, becomes political.

Furthermore, this relational quality also implies a give and take between the topic and its situated-ness; that is to say, the location of the research influences the answers I, the researcher, am able to find. In this case, a prerequisite for grounding research in India, is an ontology and epistemology that is able to hold multiple truths, together, simultaneously, without negating or being partial to one, over the other; acknowledging them for what they are when differentiated, while providing space for integration in particularity to the topic.

14 "A world view is a tool used in the attempt to realize one’s aspirations in life. Its usefulness is measured by determining how helpful it is in attaining a state of inner tranquility, serenity and balance, a psychological state which expresses itself in harmonious, that is peaceful, relationships among the members of society, their environment and the cosmos. Change can be introduced into this world view whenever the objective of requires it, but not as a purpose for itself" (Dietrich and Sützl, 294).

15 Refer to the glossary for definition.
1.4.1. A Transrational Approach: the simple complexity of research

If I allow it to, the process of writing this thesis has the propensity to,

take [me] on a journey through difficult terrain in search of a place with great promise but where it is hardly possible to live except in short, extraordinary moments. It is the place where simplicity and complexity meet. I happen to believe that this is also the place where the heart of [peace research] pounds a steady but not often perceived rhythm and where the source of the moral imagination finds inspiration (Lederach 2005, 67).

This, I believe, in a nutshell, is an apt description of conducting research within a transrational worldview.

At the very onset of this research exploration, I touched upon, the idea of transrationality, as another way of making sense of the world, one that is particular to the Innsbruck School of Peace Studies.

1.4.1.1. Many Peaces: A Heterogeneous Perspective

On a primary level, a transrational approach to peace presents itself as benefiting from the debates and advancements of the postmodern condition\(^{16}\), that are grounded in the acknowledgement of many truths, while consciously allowing for the incorporation of the knowledge generated through energetic traditions (across the world), with a twist\(^{17}\) resulting in a clarion call for many peaces.

\(^{16}\) “Postmodernity...describes the state of mind of one or several generations that have had to painfully dissociate themselves from the great truths of the previous epoch, without having found for themselves a new unitary system of reference. This state could be described by the word dis-illusionment. People have become aware of the relativity of those truths in whose absolute validity they used to believe...those truths have lost their binding character...it is precisely this insight that there cannot be the one truth which allows for a...plurality of truths” (Dietrich and Sützl 2006, 283).

\(^{17}\)“Twisting is a concept that Heidegger... used to refer to the understanding of something in a different way. Twisting is not a moral concept. It doesn’t take something that is “good” and make it something “bad.” It simply changes one thing to another thing so it can be used differently. (Taylor 2016, 22).”
It follows, “that the idea of one (perpetual) peace in the one world, as...is [evident from] all key documents of modern world politics, is...sheer intellectual violence vis-à-vis those who cannot [or do not want to] share this idea, because it is just this: an idea, put in front of [us] in order to conceal that not even this one is equal” (Dietrich & Sützl 2006, 300).

Wolfgang Dietrich (2006, 2012) goes on to interpret and identify the peaces in four major groups, which he aptly terms as peace families; namely, the energetic, the moral, the modern and postmodern peaces. Transrationality then characterises each of these families with a unique temperament; energetic peaces are born out of harmony; moral peaces concern themselves with notions and ideas of justice; modern peaces are obsessed with achieving a singular security; and postmodern peaces, as has already been mentioned, are existential in nature, preoccupied with questions of truths. Furthermore, on a secondary level, taking cognizance of the relational nature of human existence transrationality adds depth to the aforementioned attributes by engaging with them, in a holistic manner [where it concerns itself with their] dynamic equilibrium as a larger [conception] of peace... [this approach is termed as] trans-rational, because it appreciates and applies the rationality of modern science while it transgresses its limits and holistically embraces all [emphasis-added] aspects of human nature for its interpretation of peace. It is rational and so much more...emotional, mental and spiritual [to name a few] (Dietrich 2014, 48).

1.4.1.2. Where Am I, the Researcher, Located?

For the purposes of undertaking research, transrationality begins at finding inspiration in the practice-oriented academic work of John Paul Lederach, starting with his conflict
Lederach’s triangle provides the social sciences with a research tool that, builds on, and transforms, Galtung’s (1990) prescriptive and reductive triangle of physical, structural and cultural violence; to explore the context-specific personal and relational nature of individuals and collectives functioning at varying levels within a conflicting system. Lederach’s triangle identifies three distinct levels at which actors within a system can function: 1) the grassroots; 2) the middle-range connectors; and 3) the top-level decision-makers. The recognition of human beings as actors, with internal processes and external relations, functioning within a system, is a crucial building block for a transrational ontology.

The Innsbruck School of Peace evolves the triangle to a “...pyramid by rendering it to represent four quadrants: ‘person’, ‘structure’, ‘relation’, and ‘culture’...” (Dietrich 2014, 50), that is, personal harmony; structural justice; relational security and cultural truth, thereby incorporating the advancements of humanistic and transpersonal psychology, which regard the human being (in this case, the researcher) as a permanently oscillating meeting point or a contact boundary at work. Thus, I the researcher, am a constantly emergent phenomenon in relation to my research; where the knowledge that exists within me is not isolated and is in constant contact with what is happening outside of me.

I am thus located within a north Indian context, where my research is strongly informed by my spiritual practice and understanding of Buddhism as practised within the SGI.

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18 Refer to Appendix 1(d) for a visual representation.
19 Refer to Appendix 1(c) for a visual representation.
20 Refer to Appendix 1(e) for a visual representation.
21 A tradition of Gestalt Therapy, refer to glossary for definition.
1.4.1.3.  The Potentiality of Depth – How Far am I Willing to Go?

For me, as an Indian woman, the revolutionary nature of a transrational research methodology comes alive in its presentation, integration and application of “the chakra philosophy of Tantra Yoga in the tradition of Patanjali and Shankarā22” (Dietrich 2014, 50) as an epistemologically viable tool of inquiry that I can employ in order to explore the potentiality of my self, as a resource to my research; which, until now, as a consequence of patriarchy, especially with respect to my educational experience in India, had been classified as private, and therefore, unfit or inappropriate as a source of credible knowledge towards a research exploration. Consequently, the decision, on my part to adopt such a methodological framework is a political one; it allows me to apply the chakra philosophy from the perspective of Nichiren Buddhism and concept of the Ten Worlds23 as a commentary on the human condition.

The layers, in relation to the chakra system, are identified as follows;

there is a sexual, a socioemotional and a mental layer underneath the material and personal surface, the episode of the Ego’s contact boundary at work. Beyond (inside) the mental layer there is the spiritual layer, which does not refer to the Ego anymore but to what Yoga-Philosophy calls the Self [ātmān], the aspect of every person that remains after dismantling all Ego layers. Because it is a natural human property and potential, the spiritual layer is principally accessible for every person [as a resource] but it is hard to say anything meaningful about it, precisely because it is trans-rational, beyond reason. The mind does not have words for it, though peak- and peace-experiences happen precisely there, when the Ego is twisted, that is, when for a moment the primordial, harmonious and eternal unity

22 Refer to glossary for a detailed explanation on the “chakrā philosophy”.
23 Refer to glossary for a detailed explanation on the “Ten Worlds”.

of individual and universal existence is experienced by the human being (Dietrich 2014, 50).

From the perspective of traditional feminism, transrationality provides me with yet another tool with which to tackle patriarchy, bringing the private into the public. However, that is not the purpose for which I have adopted such an approach. On the contrary, and possibly even more radically, I have adopted it because it provides me with a frame that allows me to contend, that feminisms (yes, plural) in India, as they currently stand, require more than an intellectual depth and engagement, which means, the personal demands a deeper exploration. Perhaps, the greatest triumph of patriarchies lies in the resilience with which they reproduce old, and introduce new, obstacles, that keep us in a state of constant rebellion (feminisms); prohibiting us from realizing the full scope, that is, the multidimensionality of our human existence. I contend, that patriarchies and feminisms are two sides of the same coin. Mutually inclusive, in power and resistance, one feeding the other and vice versa. A transrational perspective allows me to push the limits of feminist research and employ tools that add depth to the personal. Given their relational nature, by doing so, I also push on the limits of patriarchy and what is deemed political and thus available for transformation.

The above-mentioned layers highlight the resulting themes, or the kinds of hunger, that emerge when the intra- and interpersonal levels are consciously engaged with, these are of particular note for feminist movements. They might even sound familiar. From the perspective of the former (individual), these can be identified as sexual desire, social belonging, emotional attachment, and mental consciousness; getting activated in
connection to the latter (collective), namely, family, community, society and global policity\textsuperscript{24}.

### 1.4.1.4. Awakening to the Principles Behind Transrational Research

By now it should be evident, that a transrational approach to research rejoices in the simple complexity of the human experience (and existence). By adopting a transrational approach to my research, I make the conscious decision of placing my (aforementioned) layers in the service of my topic. This necessitates practicing the principles of correspondence, resonance and homeostatic balance between my intra- and interpersonal layers; or the individual and the collective. Inspired by Bertalanffy's general systems theory, these principles find a keen concurrence with my practice of Buddhism. They are identified as:

- **correspondence** which invites the researcher to engage with her shadows, contradictions and needs that come up during the course of the research journey; it encourages me to build and expand my awareness regarding the nature of the relationship between my inter- and intrapersonal layers. Crucially, it requires me to remember that this is not a linear undertaking, but dynamic and causal in nature; which means, while, the felt tonality of some layers might be stronger than others, all of them are always at play;

- **resonance** invites me to progressively deepen my relationship with myself in relation to my research; it requires awareness of my own conflictive personality, acting as a receiver, transmitter and transformer of knowledge and information.

\textsuperscript{24} “Policity is an artificial word, which [the Innsbruck School of Peace has] coined for the primordial human awareness of our existence in physical time and space, the precondition for the mental understanding of ourselves as social beings and any idea about social organization” (Dietrich 2014, 51).
The depth at which I know myself, is the depth to which I can explore my topic, and invite my audience to do the same through the reading of this text;

- **homeostasis** recognises the essential nature of energetic systems to find balance; it implies a dynamic equilibrium and conscious openness.

Consequently, such an ontology, acknowledges multiples modes of knowing and implies an epistemology of ongoing differentiation; however, it goes one-step further, and introduces the space for their dynamic integration into a synoptic and systemic worldview. Transrational epistemologies are, therefore, transformative, holistic and experiential in the intimacy, openness and vulnerability they elicit (if not cajole or demand) from the researcher, the researched and if I am really lucky, you, the reader.

Therefore, transrational research methods are, process-oriented practices, born out of relatedness on two levels; my relationship (as the researcher) with my self and subsequently, my relationship with my topic. Such methods, by their very nature demand the ethics of authenticity and honesty with regard to my position, process and scholarship; furthermore, they necessitate a self-reflexive deep dive of my whole being (mind, body and soul) in connection to my topic. Therefore, in addition to conducting a qualitative interdisciplinary analysis of academic sources, the frame of transrationality allows me to rely on my Buddhist practice as a central method of information and knowledge integration, as I consciously ruminate on the topic. Over the past ten months, I have attempted to explore the connection between meditation (internal) and mediation (external), while I have sought to understand what the topic is attempting to communicate through me; which layers does it trigger within me and why; and finally, how can it be expressed through the language of words (Lederach and Woodhouse 2016).

Hence, while recognizing and being deeply grateful to postmodernity and specifically the many feminisms it has given the light of day to, transrational research
methods provide me with the space to go one step further, to differentiate and reintegrate, anew my feminism, in relation to how my experiences have made me. And, in a similar vein, they provide me with the necessary tools required to present Sītā’s story anew. Needless to say, since I am engaging with India, it only seems to logical to employ a methodology that finds its roots in conceptions of peace emanating from the subcontinent.

In light of the above explanation, the primary research question then evolves to read as follows:

• How does my spiritual awareness elicit a deeper, clearer understanding of my hunger instinct, thereby, harmonizing my feminism and facilitating my belonging in the now?

1.4.2. Structure

In its entirety, the structure is grounded in a transrational worldview. This means that the transrational peace philosophy guides and informs the structure of this thesis project; it is the glue that holds it together. Going back to the question, the aim of the research inquiry is to:

1. deduce if spiritual awareness elicits a deeper, layered understanding of my hunger instinct thereby,

2. harmonizing my feminism, which means:

   a. facilitating, or bringing new energy into the system, to

   b. establish a renewed sense of belonging in the here and now

Hence, in Chapter 2 I shall explore what it means to be a spiritually aware Indian woman. This will be done by first, elaborating on what it means to be aware, followed by
specifically exploring what I mean by spiritual awareness in the Indian context. I aim to understand, through my experiences, how my feminism in India, is informed by my spiritual practice of Buddhism and vice versa. By adopting such a framework, it is my intention to present to the reader, the significance of cultivating a spiritual awareness, that is relational and sensitive to the variations and contradictions that exist within and without our conceptions of feminism and peace.

In *chapter 3*, I elaborate on how, the aforementioned spiritual awareness, carries the potential to elicit a deeper understanding of the self or the personal. I intend to argue that feminism is an expression of the human hunger instinct towards self-realization, in response to the systemic imbalances caused by chauvinism. Functioning primarily on the sexual-familial, socioemotional-communal, and mental-societal layer it seeks personal harmony. Such an awakening, I will argue, facilitates the process of belonging in the here and now; within my body and my environment; such a process infuses the slogan ‘the personal is political’ with renewed vigour, which in turn contributes to the art and soul of peace work.

It is my intention to depict this relational truth in *Chapter 4* through a re-visioning of Sitā’s journey in the Rāmāyanā. I intend to present an old story for my present time, finding a new beginning, middle and end. It is my intention to tangibly connect the findings of *Chapter 2* and *3* through the story of my Sitā.

And finally, through my concluding remarks I shall bring this journey to a close, by revisiting my main reflections; the radical consequence of including India’s energetic knowledge into academic research, the power of acknowledging my hunger towards self-actualization as an expression of my feminism, and potentiality of harmonizing it with a spiritually aware self. I shall point out the potential for impact in the reclaiming of my
spiritual truths, within the context of the Indian subcontinent. I shall also point to potential challenges I foresee in such an endeavour.

1.5. State of the Art – From Where do I Emerge?

“...It is probably true quite generally that in the history of human thinking the most fruitful developments frequently take place at those points where two [or more] different lines of thought meet. These lines may have their roots in quite different parts of human culture, in different times or different cultural environments or different religious traditions: hence if they actually meet, that is, if they are at least so much related to each other that a real interaction can take place, then one may hope that new and interesting developments may follow” (Heisenberg as quoted in Capra 1982, 10).

1.5.1. Many Peaces and Elicitive Conflict Transformation

Through the previous sections on methodology and structure I have highlighted the transrational approaches to peace research and elicitive conflict transformation (Dietrich 2013, 2014) as the metaphorical glue, that hold this entire project together, and are therefore one of the main sources for this research undertaking.

Utilising the grounding of transrational peace research in plural epistemologies the exploration and understanding of hunger as a relational, embodied, psycho-social and spiritual phenomenon, much like peace, is being attempted. In this pursuit, the writings of Fritz Perls (1992), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999), Michael Daniels (2005) and Muñoz (2006) are instructional.

1.5.2. Indian Philosophy

As the research inquiry progresses, the thesis will endeavour to explore how a spiritually aware woman experiences hunger in north India. To facilitate a more structured
approach, this inquiry, at first, is divided into two, mutually inclusive and influencing, routes, which are ultimately designed to converge. However, in their divergence I hope to gain further insight into the topic. As a practical investigative tool, these routes will be explored based on the transrational method of Elicitive Conflict Mapping (Álvarez 2014).

Having established this, the first course, given the context and the content of this investigation, inevitably engages with proposals of a spiritual nature. I begin my investigation in pre-modern times by engaging with the life and spiritual ideology of Shākyamuni Buddha and the moral spirituality of Mirabai (Khilnani 2016). I shall explore the relevance of certain Buddhist concepts (such as the Ten Worlds, earthly desires lead to enlightenment, dependent origination, and the bodhisattvā way), as understood and practiced within the SGI, to the lives of women in contemporary Indian times. I plan to do this primarily and extensively through the *Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* (translated and published by the SGI 1999), and the corresponding explanations and interpretations of his writings by Daisaku Ikeda (2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015). A reading of Hesse’s *Siddhartha* (2008) will prove to be insightful in much the same way as Sunil Khilnani’s (2016) commentary on the Buddha, in developing the premise, “earthly desires lead to enlightenment” as a function of hunger functioning from the spiritual layer. In contrast, the engagement with Mirabai, though not as deep, is nevertheless significant (and required) as arguably the “first loud and clear women’s voice” (Doniger as quoted in Khilnani 2016, 111) in search of, and seeking the divine within Indian religious history situated in north India. I elaborate further on this thread in the subsequent section.

From pre-modern times, the inquiry shall move on to explore the plurality of hunger located within a pre-independent (colonial) India. Here, I recognise the inevitable religious overlap (in this case with Hinduism and its contradictions) with spirituality that cannot be disentangled from the discourse of Indian philosophical thinkers. Nevertheless,
I shall make an attempt to focus on the essence of their ideas and their effectiveness in presenting a woman's pursuit of spiritual awareness. The journey shall begin with deepening an understanding of hunger, in relation to Gandhi’s proposals on ahimsā, satyāgraha and swarāj, through his *My Experiments with the Truth* (2016) and *Hind Swarāj* (2009), originally published in 1925 and 1909 respectively. This is followed by an engagement with Krishnamurti's (2001, 2002), perspectives on the multifarious aspects of the mind, meditation, religion and notions of the self. From here I shall move to Ambedkar’s seminal work *Annihilation of Caste* (2014), originally published in 1936, along with his *Riddles in Hinduism* (2016). These texts provide a caste-based perspective on the nature of hunger; shedding possible light on how hunger is experienced differently, depending on where one is located within the system.

The aforementioned thinkers can also be identified as individuals who experienced the transition from a pre-independent to a post-independent India. Consequently, I move to authors writing from the reality of a post-independent India. Here, the work of Ramachandra Gandhi (1992, 2015) proves to be crucial in deepening an understanding of the All-One, or ātmān, and its pursuit by human beings. These ruminations are inevitably, and unsurprisingly, heavily influenced by the politics of religion. This is where the first route culminates.

Through the second route, I shall attempt to explore the dimensions of a spiritually aware woman's hunger through the narratives of the epic, Rāmāyanā, by focussing specifically on Sītā’s journey. This means revisiting and rereading the texts. Given the frame of a master’s thesis, I have chosen to focus exclusively on commentaries written in English. Here, I have relied upon the comprehensive work of Devdutt Patanaik (2006,
2013, 2015) where he has consolidated the numerous, diverse tellings of the epic for current times. On the other hand, A.K. Ramanujan’s commentary, *Three Hundred Rāmāyanas* (as found in Dharwadker, 2004), has established the plurality of tellings as an integral approach to engaging with the narratives it weaves.

By following these two routes, together, I aim to construct a holistic narrative of the temperament of hunger as a function of many peace(s) (and peace-less-ness).

1.5.3. Post Modernity | Post – Colonialism | Indian Feminisms

The theme of plurality as a fundamental reality in the Indian context continues as the research shall move into post-colonial times. Here, the sheer volume of feminist scholarship covering hunger, religion, spirituality, and the epics, on the subcontinent, presents itself as a double-edged sword for a novice such as myself.

Thus, I shall endeavour to maintain a close proximity to the parameters established by the research question, as a touchstone, in order to avoid getting lost in the surplus of academic sources (and therefore, narratives). Consequently, the primary filter I have applied, is a conscious decision to use feminist scholarship authored by women, (as much as possible). The secondary filter is an understanding, that in and of itself, feminism is an expression of women’s hunger (i.e. unfulfilled human potential) within a patriarchal system and I shall try to explore the diverse ways this hunger has found a voice. Having established these parameters, a chronological discovery is attempted. Beginning, once again, in pre-modern times, the following sources shall be referred to principally with respect to the myth of Sītā; beginning with Nabaneeta Dev Sen’s (1997) exploration of the earliest tellings of the Rāmāyana, in a female voice; followed by Iravati Karvē’s historical,

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25 Ramanujan argues for a preference for “…the [word] *tellings* to the usual terms *versions or variants* because the latter terms can and typically do imply that there is an invariant, an original or *Ur*-text—usually Vālmiki’s Sanskrit *Rāmāyana*, the earliest and most prestigious of them all” (Dharwadker 2004, 134). A similar understanding has been adopted for this thesis.
anthropological and secular exploration of the epics in *Yuganta* (2007); Volga’s *The Liberation of Sita* (2016); Arni’s *Sita’s Ramayana* (2015) and Pattanaik’s *Sita* (2013).

These texts shall be supplemented with feminist critiques of the Rāmāyana itself; beginning with Sally Sutherland’s (1989) commentary on the use of aggression as a strategic tool to negotiate patriarchy by female characters in the Indian epics; Madhu Kishwar’s (1997) ideas on the consequences of the injustices brought on Sītā on the lives of women in contemporary India; and finally Uma Chakravarti’s (1993) and Nivedita Menon’s (1999) interpretation of the epics as a tool towards establishing a Brahmanical patriarchy. As the inquiry moves into colonial times, Sangari and Vaid’s *Recasting of Women: Essays in Colonial History* (1989) shall be used as a main source, alongside Radha Kumar’s *A History of Doing* (1993). The latter text transitions the research inquiry into post-independence India. Where the works of Mary E. John (2008) and Karin Kapadia (2006) shall prove important in developing a comprehensive understanding of women’s lived realities in post-independent India, within the frame of the research inquiry.

Outside, and in addition, to the chronological framework, the works of author Lata Mani (2013, 2016) are essential to establishing the far reaching political consequences of approaching feminism from a spiritual perspective grounded in the personal, connected to the All-One (minus the chauvinism26). This has been juxtaposed by exploring the consequences of a spirituality getting entangled with chauvinism Arundati Roy (2014) and Tanika Sarkar (1993). Feminist academics Vandana Shiva and Gabriele Dietrich (Menon 1999) shall be referenced to gauge how Shakti or the feminine principle are

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26 Ramachandra Guha (2010, 12), employs the word chauvinism (defined as an exaggerated, excessive, prejudiced or aggressive allegiance for one’s own cause, group, or sex) creatively by highlighting it as a disintegrative force that perpetuates a competitive/egocentric hunger; a) disciplinary chauvinism: the belief that one’s academic provides richer or deeper insights that any other, b) religious chauvinism: the dogma that the faith one is born into, or which one embraces, provides a uniquely [entitled] vantage point into the existential dilemmas of...human beings, and indeed humankind, c) national chauvinism, synonymous to nationalism, d) ideological chauvinism caused by partisan adherence to a particular sect or ideology.
perceived within the feminist movements in India. Finally, Diana Eck’s *Sacred Geographies* (2012) has been crucial in establishing a visual map of the research topic.

1.5.4. Mind the Gap | Synthesizing Anew

The process of conducting this literature review brought forth the reality of far-and-few female voices emanating from the field of religion and spirituality in the Indian context. As a result, the academic narratives that exist (in relation to the topics), do so, to a large extent, in dualities; that is, in power and resistance, either highlighting the actors (men or women) as victims or survivors of the structural and cultural violence perpetrated by patriarchy (Galtung 1990).

Based on the literature view, I believe it is important to keep in mind, that conceptually Gandhi’s ideological tools of ahimsā, satyāgraha and swāraj emanated as a consequence of the aforementioned duality. The key difference here is that, as products of a spiritual awareness (particular to Gandhi), these ideological concepts were conceived as tools to pave the way towards a steady transcendence of the duality integral to the relationship between power and resistance (beginning with India’s struggle for independence)\(^{27}\).

Consequently, by extending the aforesaid conceptual reasoning to the relational duality of feminisms (resistance) and patriarchies (power), I identify the absence of a harmonising influence, on a practical and academic level, as a significant gap within the state of the art (women’s movement). This gap is apparent in the perpetually strained interlocking of feminisms with various kinds of chauvinisms (as a function of patriarchy),

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\(^{27}\) Through the application of the aforementioned tools, on one level, and by perceiving power and resistance as mutually inclusive parts of a larger whole, on the other, not only did Gandhi surpass the limits of this duality, on a personal level, but was able to successfully galvanise the tools to address the needs (hungers) of a larger collective, while functioning within a modern frame (for however short a period of time).
preserving the dissonant dynamic in a never-ending battle. What is required, therefore, is the identification of a means, amongst the theoretical many, through which a harmonization can be attempted. A step is taken in this direction by identifying the human hunger instinct (Perls 1992), as a tangible concept, that emanates from this dissonant dynamic, which, through exercising spiritually awareness, can be developed in a context specific way, as a harmonizing force towards establishing a dynamic equilibrium.

In conclusion, as is evident through the state of the art, any research exploration located within the Indian geography is a considerable undertaking, quite simply because of the wealth of civilizational knowledge generated over millennia, potentially at the researcher’s disposal. Needless to say, the sources I have identified and applied, lie at the tip of the metaphorical iceberg, with each source, presenting the promise of a unique exploration of its own, in and of itself. Mercifully, through the parameters established by the research question, I attempt to realign these sources anew, keeping a spiritually aware women’s hunger instinct at the centre, within the larger frame of a transrational research inquiry. I reiterate, the undertaking of this literature review reaffirms my conviction that the adaptation of a transrational research methodology exponentially widens the scope of academic research within the Indian context.
2. Spiritual Awareness: The Essence of a Human Revolution

I don't want to lose myself
in the world of abstract thought.
For I know that
when conceptual abstraction
goes bad
the treasure of lived reality
— that which should be truth—
gets pared away
and discarded. (Ikeda 2014, 33)

2.1. What does it mean to ‘live in awareness’?

In my opinion, based on the experiences that have made me, I believe, to ‘live in awareness’ means to be awake to the phenomenon that is one’s existence. It means to affirm, through one’s thoughts, words and action, that she is consequent. To live in awareness means recognising that one does not live in isolation, and therefore, the awareness with which she leads her life impacts the system she is inhabiting. It is a silent revolution.

This is a process, one that begins with a sense of its conspicuous absence. I did not always feel this way. I did not always think this way. “This” is a phenomenon I largely took for granted before becoming consciously aware of it. At a very basic level, before becoming consciously aware, one is essentially in a reactive state of being, circumscribed within her body’s immediate feedback loops. Waking up, therefore, implies a gradual and on-going, evolution; on one level this means, unlearning the line of inquiry that lies in asking why one thinks and what one thinks (prevalent within systems of modern education); in order to relearn or remember energetic practices that reintroduce the question, why does one feel, what one feels; finding one’s way towards a new, more nuanced way of developing knowing, one that integrates the previous two, to ask, why does one experience, what she experiences? The process of “becoming” therefore, is the development of a visceral
consciousness, that is at once reliant on the rational as well as the irrational ways of knowing and a direct result of their interplay. Wherein, one facilitates the digestion of the epiphanies of the other.

To reiterate, a person's sense of awareness can be described as her ability to cogently comprehend the totality of her existence; to be awake, not just to herself, but to her surroundings, her place in the world, and at the limit point, her place in the cosmos.

But, I am getting ahead of myself. Before we arrive at the aforementioned stage, there is a need to retrace one's steps to the very beginning – which is always a very good place to start. Here, awareness implies, the gradual unveiling of the way a person perceives the world in which she lives, and conversely, how this world perceives her. This awareness, whether one is conscious of it or not, is always in a constant flux, throughout the course of one's life. This, then presents a choice; do I want to live in awareness?

2.1.1. The Magic of Senses

At a very basic level, living in awareness implies being aware of one's senses; how I smell, taste, see, feel and hear the world. These somatic antennas trigger sensations in the body, which are synthesized as feelings by the brain to present a picture. Now, how a person feels about this picture, is where things get interesting (and complicated). An individual's feelings, as has already been pointed out, multiple times before, do not exist in a vacuum, they are fundamentally relational, the consequence of the body being a contact boundary at work. Because they are relational, they have a value, they can make one feel happy, sad, angry, excited, lost, loved – a whole spectrum of emotions, the scope of which, cannot possibly be covered in a lifetime, let alone in a master's thesis.
However, living in awareness implies acknowledging feelings and manifesting the courage to differentiate them from emotions as and when they make themselves known in a context-specific, relationally unique occurrence, which at the same time is a reflection of properties connected to a larger whole. Although, potentially, an overwhelming undertaking, living in awareness can be likened to the world’s relation with the colour blue; “John Paul Lederach says that the world would be [colourless] if blue were the only existing [colour]. Blue only turns blue in relation to other [colours] and it is this tension that makes the world [colourful]” (as quoted in Dietrich 2012, 271).

Through the application of energetic practices, the prerequisite, I realized, for moving from a state of subconscious reaction to conscious awareness, is to proactively expand the manner in which a person associates with her sense of being; her “isness” (Mani and Frankenberg 2013, 12-18). This means waking up and paying attention to; a) the body or the physical aspect of its processes, situation or experience; b) the mind or the act of thinking—the concepts that shape the manner in which a person perceives her reality; c) the heart or the mind—being able to exercise mindfulness, or the compassionate ability to differentiate between feelings and emotions; and at the limit point, d) the existential or advaita and recognising the ātmān, in other words, becoming aware of the whole person as an integrated personal whole. Such an approach results in the transformation of the act of becoming aware and being aware, from a passive reaction, to an active response.

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28 According to Dietrich, “[here] the distinction between emotion as a certain form of feeling remembered from past situations on the one hand and actual feelings in their currently experienced contexts on the other is just as important as that between thoughts as fragments of unconscious stories, which arise from the past, and the conscious rationality of actions oriented on the present” (2012, 234).

29 I rely here on my practice of Buddhism, within the frame of the SGI, wherein, “the Japanese word “kokoro,” or “shin”, which is customarily translated as “mind” or “heart,” has no exact English equivalent, for it is a term that encompasses the whole of one’s mind, spirit, emotions, volition, and psyche. It can also indicate “life” as a psychosomatic entity” (SGI 1999, xxxiv). This definition can be likened (but not equated) to the conception of ātmān within the frame of a spiritual interpretation of Hinduism.
Furthermore, the adaptation of such an approach carries the propensity to improve the felt quality of awareness; causing it to acquire depth and dimension, requiring one's being, in its entirety, to be situated in the here and now. It also results in one's sensory antennas acquiring an empathic filter; that is, cognisant of their tremendous power to shape, define, limit or open a person's present. Such, is the simple complexity of the act of awareness; a deeper, clearer understanding of one's self.

2.1.2. Self-respect

Ultimately, a great starting point at the personal level, is to associate the process of living in awareness or waking up to “existence”, to an exercise in self-respect. Experientially, this is an emotion, that makes itself known by its noticeable absence. Here, I define self-respect as an awareness of the inherent dignity of all life, expressed in the form of kindness and compassion a person practices towards her self and the environment.

However, more often than not, within the frame of the modern world, this dignity tends to be primarily connected with the surficial absence of violence (physical or mental), lacking depth or resonance. In my experience, every person has a sense of self-respect. It has a curious nature, where it possesses an inherent personal and collective dimension; and, therefore, from a systemic point of view, the former has the ability to affect the latter and vice versa.

What is it about the felt tonality of this emotion that has the power to elicit, a very guttural, moral response, irrespective of one’s region, religion, class, caste, gender, sexuality or ethnicity? There is a sensation here that is hard to identify from the singularity of a rational mind. In my experience, from one perspective, based in the north
Indian context, within a patriarchal system, this feeling is the result of a collision of egos, feeling threatened and/or humiliated, at the individual and collective levels.

Needless to say, from a postmodern perspective, the politics of self-respect can be deconstructed in a million different ways, starting with, but not limited to, understanding the dynamics of power and resistance. Even though, such a line of inquiry does not lie directly within the scope of this thesis, I will say, “...the struggles to affirm one’s moral worth [does] not necessarily take the form of a demand for justice. Rather that struggle can express itself as...a competitive debasement of others...as [much as] a demand for reciprocity and mutual recognition” (Mehta 2003, 45), in other words, an aggressive form of hunger.

So, what path or paths should one adopt to harmonize this awareness?

2.2. Of faith and spirituality

As has been highlighted earlier, through the research problem, being raised in an Indian household implies having a complicated relationship with religion. The Indian condition, I believe, is characterised and informed by the dichotomies of faith; that is, the tension that exists between religion and spirituality. If one chooses to define the act of prayer as a faith-based inquiry of the world, then, by this logic, the nature of one's prayer is defined by the path she chooses. In the Indian context, this dichotomy has fuelled the steady rise of Hindutva, (a nationalist, religious-right-wing variant of Hinduism), that has (and continues to) leave a trail of death, despair and destruction in its wake. The growing

30 “The ego is [defined here as] a reaction against the memory of its [one’s] own weakness, which results in [the manifestation of an exaggerated hunger instinct activated by the] desire to...possess, dominate or even kill. It perceives itself as a fragment within a hostile universe... [disconnected]... and surrounded by other egos, which it either sees as a potential threat or [a resource to be exploited for personal gain]. It feels vulnerable and threatened and lives in a state of permanent fear and neediness. The ego needs competition, problems, conflicts, and enemies in order maintain the feeling of separation which is crucial for its identity” (Dietrich 2012, 234). This ego has an insatiable hunger for relational pain.
number of individuals championing the rise of Hindu majoritarianism, leaves me genuinely perplexed, and often wondering, if the Indian democratic experiment in on the road to failure. As the country’s secular fabric unravels I have often found myself ruminating on how Gandhi, Krishnamurti, Tagore, or Paramahamsā would respond to the crisis of faith in our times.

As has been mentioned previously, in the literature review, there exists a very palpable dearth of Indian feminist academics, who have engaged with, and published their thoughts and ideas on the intersection of faith, spirituality, notions of the divine and sacred in the context of everyday (political) life in contemporary India. While the abovementioned men have contributed greatly to the understanding of the self, from a spiritual perspective, within the Indian context, I feel my knowledge to be largely incomplete, missing a source with which it can find correspondence and resonance. Until, I rediscovered Lata Mani (2009). However, even so, this was one source, in comparison to the very many, male authors out there. The aim of making this gap apparent again is to point out the significant role intuition, informed by the practice of Buddhism, has played, as a way of knowing, especially when navigating the intersectionality of faith and spirituality in relation to women’s hunger instinct and awareness in specific.

2.2.1. Born anew

In the summer of 2016, as I sat chanting against the backdrop of the mountains and the gushing sounds of the Innis river, in the middle of no-man’s land, I became comfortable with the darkness; sensing this comfort, I felt a third eye open. It felt like the opening of a door, startled at first, I found myself taking a step towards and through it. As this inner eye adjusted to the darker darkness, the vision of a massive, tremendous, purposeful oval, glowing and moving with great patience made itself apparent. All-encompassing and yet
exuding calm and composure. Emanating from this oval were waves of galaxies, stars, and other glowing bodies, simply flowing, while I stood in the middle of it all, humbled, overwhelmed and grateful to be witnessing such a phenomenon. Effortlessly, this oval seem to convey that I could continue holding on to views of life that were no longer serving me, that I had possibly misappropriated half-heartedly and incompletely, out of fear and doubt, as my own. Or, I could choose to be born anew

[...] I could in no way confuse this experience with what I had earlier rejected, namely, the smug conventionalism and bigotry of a ‘liberal’ Hinduism and the more overt hostility of the conservative and Right-wing variant. I was forced to confront the reality that the divine could not be confused with what religion had made or her/him/it (Mani 2016, 8).

This experience of witnessing an indescribable phenomenon, for the first time, was and will continue, to be a great source of learning. However, the fact that this experience took place within an educational frame of a master’s programme, embedded in the larger structure of a modern European university makes it even more special and revolutionary.

This thesis project is an example of the ongoing unfolding such an experience can elicit. Furthermore, the potentiality of transformation such an experience presents for the practice of feminism is immense. Spirituality, can thus be defined as a path that presents itself as a means to wake up or become conscious of the existence of a higher-self (from a Buddhist perspective) or transpersonal self, (from a psychological one). Here, the perception of self-respect is nourished by this sacred quality, that transpersonal

31 “With the dissolution of the contact boundary, interpersonal and intrapersonal layers flow into each other in a paradoxical fashion. There are no boundaries between the witness and the world. There is no difference, no dividing line between the intrapersonal awareness and interpersonal existence...The dissolution of the contact boundary continues beyond the ego layers in transrationality. Where there was the I and the We before, there is not the subjectless stillness of being” (Dietrich 2013, 223).
psychologist C.G. Jung (1973) identified as “the numinous” connection; the ‘I’, that is ‘I’ and
at the same time larger than ‘I’ – connected to a larger mysterious quality, the expansion
of this ‘I’ results in the shattering of the lesser self or ego (Dietrich 2012, Mani 2016).

What does this awakening, or a relational, embodied, psycho-social and spiritual
experience of personal harmony, reveal about the chauvinism of death, despair and
destruction, mentioned earlier? Once again, Mani’s words prove to be instructive and
insightful,

The deeper I [have] journeyed [since the experience] the more the sense of duality
– between inside and outside, myself and others, good and bad – [has] softened,
though not into some indistinguishable reality...I [have been courageous enough
to] look within even as I [appear] to look without...The awareness of how [doubt],
fee, greed, attachment and rage... structure our perception of reality [has fed the
realisation] that the work of [feminisms] cannot proceed without revolutionising
the consciousness of each individual...[Needless to say, spiritual] wisdom about
the sources of suffering cannot by [themselves] bring about a change of heart.
Genuine change depends on [the extent to which] each [person is] willing to
investigate what motivates and grounds [their] desire to hate, exclude and inflict
suffering on fellow beings...The spiritual path calls upon [the person] to rethink
conventional notions of responsibility and action...Each [person's] thoughts [and]
actions reverberates to the farthest reaches of the universe and even affects the
cycles of nature. Our beingness, our very breath, has an impact on the universe. It
is impossible for an individual to have no effect on her or his environment... [if one
allows the] significance of this reality [to sink in] ... [she] becomes even more
conscious of the complex dance of cause and effect, the layering of individual,
community, national, international and planetary action, and the ignorance...that
can transform *dharmic* or good intent into *adharmic* or bad practice... One dedicates oneself to [her spiritual truths], leaving to that wisdom the task of transforming the hearts and minds of others. Responsibility thus emerges as the ability to respond in congruence with [these spiritual truths] while action is that which arises from the cultivation of its principles (Mani 2016, 9-11).

This, spiritual awareness is the act of human revolution, it elicits a deeper, more clearer understanding of a person’s hunger instinct and, on one layer, helps in recognising it as an expression of feminism. However, this revolution, is so much more, it equips the practitioner with the courage to authentically come to terms and engage with the nature of her hunger; it endows her with the wisdom to perceive it as a drive towards self-realization; and finally, it produces compassion. This compassion holds the potential to become the vehicle through which hunger can travel into the light, outside the shadows of aggression and competition. In case, it is already not clear, this is an intensely personal process, being put to service for political purposes. A process that tends to make society quite uneasy and uncomfortable. Because, in doing the above, feminism takes a new form; one not grounded in rebellion, and therefore, not exhausting, but grounded in harmony, in the awakened self, and thus nourishing. Curiously, this is possibly the most potent and consequential revolutions of them all.
It is fine to doubt
to struggle in earnest anguish.
But do you end up a mere
captive of the darkness?
Or do you charge into the dark
making it the impetus
for your own construction
and transformation?
It is the final outcome
that matters. (Ikeda 2014, 22)

3.1. The Eloquence of an Unencumbered (yet nuanced) Hunger

With this chapter the research inquiry arrives at the heart of the matter; an investigation, on the one hand, into the nature, depth and dimensions of a woman’s hunger as a device used for negotiating the dysfunctional system of patriarchies; and the extent to which such a negotiation facilitates belonging in the here and now, on the other. The ensuing analysis aims to explore the potentiality of a spiritually aware hunger as a means of transforming, and possibly transcending, this dysfunctional duality inherent in the aggressive relational dynamic of feminisms and chauvinisms. This is done on the premise that, the more one wakes up to the varying contours of their hunger instinct and is able to perceive them as a simultaneous cause and effect\textsuperscript{32} of the system one is embedded in, the more they are able to practice a path of dynamic equilibrium. At an intrapersonal level, this translates into the maintenance of a dynamic equilibrium between sexual desire, social belonging, mental consciousness and spiritual awareness; organically reflected without, on an interpersonal level, through the creation of a similar equilibrium between personal harmony, structural justice, relational security and cultural truths. I shall address the latter in more detail, within the frame of the five peace families, in the

\textsuperscript{32} Refer to the Glossary for further explanation.
subsequent chapter, by engaging with the myth of Sītā. For now, the focus remains on the former.

Having established that as it stands, the system is dysfunctional, skewed and out-of-balance – within and without, the research process adopts the applied method of Elicitive Conflict Mapping (ECM)\textsuperscript{33} as the operationalising tool of a transrational research methodology, to move forward. It is important to bear in mind, that “ECM is not directed at an idealised destination in the distant future, [it is geared] towards the question: In which direction can the step be taken in order to maintain or recover\textsuperscript{34} the balance of the system? Precisely because social systems and their conflicts are always complex, such [an] orientation is necessary” (Álvarez 2014, 59). In other words, ECM mapping is focussed on the ever evolving and alive, potentiality of the present moment, embodied in the choices a person makes, as a consequence of living in, and negotiating with the social world. This engagement can be surmised as follows, “[first], there are the ways in which we try to control our bodies and in which they “get out of control.” Second, there are cases in which our conscious values conflict with the values implicit in our behaviour. Third, there are disparities between what we know or believe about us. Fourth, there are experiences of taking an external view point, as when we imitate others or try to see the world as they do. And last, there are the forms on inner dialog and inner monitoring we engage in” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 267).

\textsuperscript{33} The different facets of this tool have already been discussed in depth in the methodology section of this thesis. I invite the reader to refer to Appendix I Figure 2 for a visual representation of the method of Elicitive Conflict Mapping.

\textsuperscript{34} Here “recover” is not meant as an expression of the past or “going back”, but of forward momentum. This means, no part of the dynamic whole is expected to “go back to how it used to be”, this is simply not possible. On the contrary, each part is alive, changing and therefore, ever evolving, with an intention of maintaining a dynamic balance with the other parts.
3.1.1. Revisiting the episode

Patriarchy has an all-pervasive quality which makes it difficult to pinpoint a specific episode, from the perspective of ECM. However, keeping the parameters of this research inquiry in mind and the context of north India, I identify the episode as the overt preference for a male child. Which is clearly apparent through this news story, in this specific instance; on May 29, 2017 the Delhi Police discovered the body of a young, 28-year-old, Indian woman, from the central Indian city of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. The woman was a civil engineer, an alum of the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi and in the process of conducting PhD research on climate change. Her death was declared to be a suicide. Her parents, especially her father, declared that “[it had been] a mistake to educate [his] daughter and send her to IIT. [He] should have saved all the money for her dowry” (as quoted in Harlarnkar 2017). The newspaper columnist went on to opine, “[many] women achievers live and are, perhaps, happy within the bounds of Indian tradition, but most are either brought up to agree or find they have little choice in the matter. The old India and the new live cheek by jowl. If ambitious Indian women want their freedom and manage to find a path to their dreams, compromise is common. [This young Indian woman] appears to have followed that path” (ibid).

This overt preference, for a male child, elicits a few observations and subsequent questions from the vantage point of human hunger. Namely, a female child is, on one level, a consequence of the system she is brought into by virtue of her birth. As a result, what happens, when the system does not want her, or perceives her to be a burden? How does this impact the quality and dignity of her life, experienced on an intrapersonal level? Furthermore, what happens to her hunger instinct, when there is a limitation on the space

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35 Ideally expressed as a functional cause and effect of sexual desires, social belonging, mental consciousness and spiritual awareness; as opposed to dysfunctional one.
her life can take, literally and figuratively? In my opinion, a child who is feels unwanted from the moment she is born, transitions into a girl whose needs and wants are prescribed and bound; culminating in a woman who perceives herself to be a liability to herself. The simple complexity of a person’s birth. This is the episode.

3.1.2. Observations on the persona

Consequently, this “encounter...[in] the world of the word and the voice” (Álvarez 2014, 65) contributes to the creation of unmet needs amongst all parties functioning within this dysfunctional system. In a very general sense, men and women. This, in turn, fuels a series of demands for security, justice and harmony. Security, as different from safety; manifests itself as the hunger for a secure environment which facilitates the freedom of movement within the private, as well as, public sphere. Justice, although situated in the future; reveals itself in the demand for laws and policies, that prohibit the practices of sex-selective abortions, female infanticide and dowry. However, the redressal of one demand necessitates the need for an adequate structure than can effectively implement the abovementioned laws and policies. And finally, harmony expresses itself in the construction of disharmony; the perpetuation of an “us” versus “them” narrative; and the demands of one “closed” identity, in this case the large amorphous category of “women”; which, when deconstructed generates a fair degree of disharmony across region, religion, caste, class, and sexuality from within. This, is a continuous cycle, where the only way to transform it ultimately rests on the creation of a different set of causes – which in the frame of this thesis, means spiritually aware ones.

3.1.3. Identifying a point-of-entry

From this perspective, it can be said that patriarchies function most efficiently on the first four layers of the ECM map; that is; the persona, sexual-familial layer, socioemotional-
communal layer, and the mental-societal layer. At each of these layers, every blockage or unmet need is an expression of a hunger that seeks to be acknowledged, transformed or nourished. This requires taking cognisance of the unique nature of patriarchies, finding expression at each of these layers, and in turn the corresponding feminisms they trigger. Seen from the eyes of a peace researcher, that is, from the perspective of ECM mapping, these blockages are opportunities; effects of the kind of hunger being felt in the present moment and seeking transformation.

Based on this understanding and the larger frame of the research question, the entry point of this analysis is thus located in the fifth spiritual and policiitary layer, at the grassroots level, that is the family. The depth at which this entry point is located is a cause intended to effect transformation as it reverberates from the point of entry outwards and upwards (through the preceding layers) and inwards (to the succeeding layers). The simultaneous practice of the principles of transrationality (correspondence, resonance and homeostasis) at this depth, carry the potential to exhibit considerable impact on the visible persona. The choice of an entry point is thus personal and political. Inherent within this choice is an act of subversion; the recognition that patriarchies make the systematic development of spiritual awareness through energetic practices, especially when located within the family, extremely challenging. Furthermore, this path can potentially prepare a woman on how to astutely discern and navigate a particular kind of hunger, within a family system, without getting triggered herself on the one hand, and conversely, being able to apply her biography to facilitate transformations, on the other. In other words, there exists a congruence between her inner thoughts and feelings and outer words and actions.

The investigation moves layer-by-layer, from within to without, to provide an analysis of the character of hunger at play, through the primary lens of intrapersonal
spiritual awareness. This means, given that the entry point is the fifth layer, the analysis shall begin with the fourth layer (mental/societal), and move outwards in the direction of the persona. At this juncture, it is crucial to reiterate, that this analysis is informed by the energetic practice of Buddhism; in this light, a woman’s hunger instinct shall henceforth be identified as her “earthly desires”. Earthly desires, that lead to enlightenment; where enlightenment can be described as the dynamic homeostasis of practicing the Middle Way or, to articulate this differently, what Adam Curle describes as primal and existential happiness; happiness, that is independent of external circumstances, but not apathetic towards them (Lederach and Woodhouse 2016, 190-191).

3.1.4. The Mental-Societal Layer | Opening the Gateway

From the perspective of transrationality, the mental-societal layer (anhatā) is the “gateway” between the realm of the transpersonal (the successive three layers) and realm of matter (the preceding three layers). Therefore, given its strategic location, this layer holds tremendous sway on the manner in which a person experiences her self.

In an open system, from here, emanate earthly desires of the “higher-self”, in the form of “love, compassion and devotion” (Dietrich 2013, 215), which colour the persona in a humane manner. However, when skewed, this mental consciousness expresses earthly desires (of the “lesser-self”), predominantly in the form of “[lust], obsession with power, and greed” (ibid). In Buddhist terms, this can be perceived as the shadow side of the world of anger; wherein, an abiding sense of competition, contention or predisposition towards conflict, arising from a self-centred ambition, masquerades itself in the form of self-awareness. The key distinguishable trait in this world is the

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36 Refer to the Glossary for a definition
incongruence that exists between outward appearances and behaviours versus inner feelings of envy and attachment and a power-seeking orientation.

The question then arises, what are the forms patriarchies take on this level, and consequently, what are the forms of feminisms they trigger. From a Buddhist perspective, *how* do a woman's earthly desires, at this layer, appear in ignorance, versus in spiritual awareness?

When in ignorance, within the system of the family, from the position of this layer, a woman either perceives herself to be a liability or a rebel. Both states stem from anger. With respect to the former, having internalised the societal sorrow of being born a woman (this, more often than not, is an unconscious process), the person willingly surrenders in preparation for the role of a future daughter-in-law, mother and eventually, mother-in-law. However, this preparation, takes place in a manner that addresses her insecurities stemming for perceiving one’s self as a liability over an elongated period of time (in this case, one’s entire lifetime). In this regard, all energy is channelled towards ensuring a strong marriage, ideally one that accrues power (financial, caste-status, class-status, so on and so forth), there tends to be a strong attachment to material assets as well to traditional ideas such as the bearing of a male child (once again towards the aggregation of power in one’s marital household). Eventually, at a later stage in life, upon the marriage of her son, (much to Freud’s excitement), this attachment can manifest itself in the persona of an envious mother-in-law. The mental consciousness is disallowed from

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37 In my opinion, Brahmanical patriarchy perpetuates a certain kind of relational security as the primary ideal to be aspired to; this security is found in the heterosexual institution of marriage, the ultimate purpose, towards which all hunger seems to be directed within this structure; whether the actors (men and women) choose to be consciously aware of this reality or not. In this context, a woman is educated in order to find a religion-class-caste-appropriate, financially secure man. Her income, should she choose to work, is seen as “extra”, because if she has to work, there is an inherent message of financial insecurity. Even in todays time, the structure prefers an educated stay-at-home mother. As is evident, such a structure is not only unjust towards the woman, but also perpetuates a certain kind of heterosexual masculinity, which places the burden of material security squarely on the shoulders of the “man”.
expressing feelings of love, compassion and devotion that inherently require going beyond the confines of a self-centred existence.

With respect to the latter, a rebellion that is mounted from this layer exhibits many of the same qualities grounded in fear and insecurity, concerned with the aggregation of power in order to prove one's family “wrong”. This is a never-ending journey of proving the worth of one’s life in reaction to the family’s systematic denial of it. More often than not the feminisms triggered in response, are distinguishable in their single-minded, competitive and ruthless aggregation of knowledge, in addition to financial security and obsession with power in organisational hierarchies. As Perls (1992) stipulates, the “[earthly desire] for mental and emotional food [behave] like physical hunger: K. Horney observes…that the [person] is permanently greedy for [knowledge], but that [her] greed is never satisfied. One decisive factor in this behaviour of the [person] is that [she] does not assimilate the [nourishment] offered to [her]… [she] deprecates it, so that it becomes...valueless to [her] as soon as [she obtains] it... [it is never enough] …” (129).

Coming to terms with this shadow, can be one of the more challenging aspects of a spiritually aware-self.

Nevertheless, how should a woman, perceiving this layer from the awareness of her spiritual self, attempt to transform it? To begin with, this means recognising the essential, simple complexity of the unmet needs of these earthly desires. At the “heart” of the matter, lies the sorrow and pain stemming from rejection, that disables or dissuades a woman from practising compassion, love and devotion towards herself, let alone her environment. To do this, necessitates the stepping out from the encampments of confrontation, even for a moment (in this case, feminisms versus chauvinisms), to practice deep-empathy. Which, at the anhata means permitting the dissolution of fear-induced dualities; an ‘I’ in rebellion with ‘you’ and allowing “the [confidence and courage of the]
heart skills of love, compassion and devotion” (Dietrich 2013, 216) to guide the consciousness beyond the realm of constantly feeling the need to prove something to an amorphous someone. Practices in spiritual awareness thus, gently cajole the person into developing an ability to see oneself beautiful (Marshall Rosenberg 1998).

The next question then becomes, how is the narrative transformed, when this sorrow is acknowledged? When one recognises the earthly desire to love and be loved – not in the romantic sense, of being transactional and person-oriented, but in the spiritual sense – as an attitude towards one’s life. Herein lies the fundamental recognition of the inherent dignity of life – all life, irrespective of region, religion, caste, class, gender and sexuality. Based on this, how does a transformation triggered at the gateway begin to make itself known as it travels outwards to the subsequent layers?

3.1.5. The Socioemotional-Communal Layer | Transforming Control

Through the gateway, the analysis arrives in the realm of matter, what transrationality identifies as the socioemotional-communal layer, which corresponds to the *manipura* chakra (third chakra), located at the solar plexus, within the philosophy of yoga.

In a system of dynamic homeostasis this layer exhibits the earthly desires of the higher-self in the form of trust – a consequence (and cause) of a functional *anhatā*. When distorted, it exhibits the desire for control and domination – emanating from mistrust. At the level of the episode, these motivations make themselves known through the diverse interpersonal roles women play within a family unit; daughter, sister, mother or mother-in-law to name a few. When in ignorance, these earthly desires combine the perception of perceiving oneself to be a liability with the need to feel helpless, on the one hand, and combine the need to rebel with the need to embody and exhibit “superhuman” emotional
strength on the other. These dualities pervade all relationships; they are mutually inclusive, two sides of the same coin.

The helpless persona manifests itself very many ways. The need stems from a system that demonstrates the tendency to steadily chip away at a person's sense of control over the trajectory of her life. At its limit point, all decision-making abilities lie outside the person. Ironically, in some perverse existential sense, this frees the person from the burden of responsibility, for the direction her life takes. Once again, in the first act, it is directed at marriage and the production of male heirs, and the second act, lies in ensuring the continuity of this tradition. In some ways, this need for being perceived helpless, can also be appreciated for the ingenious manner in which it manipulates the persona of heterosexual masculinities to aggregate power– this too, is an expression of a skewed need for control and dominance.

The “damsel-in-distress” requiring rescue can be highlighted as one of the more traditional ways in which this helplessness is fed. The exhibition of a possessive and/or protective tendency on the part of the male actors in the familial system (sons with respect to their mothers, husbands with respect to their wives and brothers with respect to their sisters) feeds this earthly desire. It should be self-evident that in a system that views a woman as a burden or unwanted there exists a deep sense of mistrust towards others, with very little, if any, time being spent in cultivating a sense of trust towards one's self. All energy is channelled towards navigating and strategizing, what can only be perceived, as a very treacherous terrain of family politics. The need to feel helpless in turn feeds the need to help in others. This can be highlighted as a sense of altruism that is, motivated with the need for control and dominance and presents itself with “a certain appeal... [especially with respect] to working with the...weak” (Dietrich 2013, 214).
Similar to the previous layer, the ignorance on this layer is characterized by this inner and outer incongruence.

This is where the other facet of this “intrapersonal bonding weakness” (ibid) presents itself as a double-edged sword. The earthly desire to be strong, that is, the need to exude emotional strength, presents itself as tricky territory. On the one hand, within traditional family structures, where gender normative roles are entrenched, and overtly visible, the exhibition of this strength in female actors feeds the need for control and domination. Here the image of the matriarch, as the repository and guardian of male-centred traditions, within the north Indian context, comes to mind.

On the other hand, this requirement of strength is also a reflection of the feminisms triggered in response to the aforementioned helplessness. This strength is fuelled by extreme levels of micromanagement within the familial dynamic, which makes itself evident in the over lack of personal privacy within familial systems and the tendency on the parts of women (especially mothers) to steer the course of their children’s and spouse’s lives. Without this sense of control women tend to feel rudderless.

Thus, what is the transformation spiritual awareness has the ability to elicit on this level? It is crucial to keep in mind, that from one perspective, this is a consequence and extension of the transformation of the previous layer, a metaphorical setting in motion of a domino effect.

Given the commotion that begins surfacing, through a woman’s earthly desires, in the realm of matter, the act of spiritual awareness, with calm composure, gently persuades the person to begin practicing the art of stillness as a means of rebuilding trust in one’s self as a first step towards transformation. As Lederach (2005) points out,

...[stillness] is the prerequisite to observation and the development of a capacity to see what exists...The fundamental nature of stillness flies in the face of common
notions of getting something to change... Stillness says... “Don’t just do something, stand there!” [emphasis added] The paradox is this: Still is not inactivity. It is the presence of disciplined activity without movement. Stillness is activism with a twist. It is the platform that generates authenticity of engagement, for it is the stage that makes true listening and seeing possible... Stillness requires a commitment of patience and watchfulness. Its guideposts are these: Slow down. Stop. Watch what moves around you. Feel what moves in you (104).

Stillness can only be practiced alongside the cultivation of an open heart that exudes love, compassion and devotion. It calls for a deeper engagement with one’s self, which inadvertently necessitates an authentic meeting, if a genuine transformation is intended in the nature of one’s earthly desires on this layer. A courageous endeavour is set in motion through these actions. The effect of this cause is the emergence of patience, which presents itself as a function of the “heart skills” discussed previously.

Thus, as the cacophony recedes, in the language of Buddhism, one can sharply discern the essence of the earthly desire on this layer to be cognisance of one’s power as a human being – irrespective of the roles and labels attributed to her. This is the earthly desire of being able to navigate life with self-respect and fortitude untainted by the hunger to feel helpless or conversely strong.

A transformation in this layer implies the acknowledgement of sensitivity, openness and empathy as qualities that need to be learned and practiced with compassion and devotion, especially towards one’s self. On the level of the persona, this transformation reflects in the form of belonging. A belonging that is not socially sanctioned, hence external, but internally realised, through the powerful recognition of the inherent dignity of one’s life. The element for control transforms from an externally
driven need for dominance to an internal sentinel which supports the journey of disciplining a person's earthly desires as expression of a spiritually awareness.

3.1.6. The Sexual-Familial Layer | Transforming Wounds

In this manner, the mapping process arrives at the second layer, identified as the sexual-familial layer in transrationality, which corresponds to the svādhishthānā chakra in yogic philosophy. It can also be described as the layer just under the “skin-covered ego” (Dietrich 2013, 209); where the outer world meets the inner world, what has been described as, the contact boundary at work, in previous sections. The overall emphasis of this layer remains on the five senses as receptors and transmitters of the world. “Our body is intimately tied to what we walk on, sit on, touch, taste, smell, see, breathe, and move within. Our corporeality is part of the corporeality of the world” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 565). Within the context of patriarchies and skewed earthly desires, this holds even more resonance.

Patriarchies trigger an embodied reaction in the lives of women and men. In one way, it can be argued that this is the layer at which the battles between chauvinisms and feminisms make themselves known most loudly. The impact of which reverberates internally to the deeper layers. However, in this context, the analysis is moving from within to without. This implies, that technically, the episode has the potential to come into contact with a harmonizing, transformative force in the form of a spiritually aware woman, and in doing so, it carries the potential of being transformed. This will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent section.

The sexual-familial layer, when in balance, exhibits earthly desires in an embodied, dynamic resilience and regeneration, a tendency for healing. “Sexuality, the energy of life, resides so closely beneath the skin of the ego that is often viewed as an aspect of
the...[persona]...[and it] is fascinating precisely because of its ability to shine through the mask, rather than exist as [a] part of [it]” (Dietrich 2013, 209). Nourishing the healthy expression of a person’s sexuality is a vital component of her happiness or the process of enlightenment. Within yogic traditions, a person’s sexuality is identified as the energy of life. Not to be misunderstood with procreation, this is the energy that holds the potential to feed one’s creativity. Needless to say, it is precisely in this misunderstanding, that things, colloquially put, go topsy-turvy. Imbalance within the already mentioned deeper layers, compounds to produce fear of and the need to control sexuality on this layer. Depending on the context, this happens either in a defensive or offensive manner—both are reactive actions. Governed by moral dogma and modern approaches, persons steeped in ignorance attempt at suppressing it. This attempt at suppression tends to be met with hostility, taking the expression of sexuality to the other extreme of an overt, in-one’s-face expression—the post-modern and feminist movements. This in turn leads to “[stripping] it of its healing nature and depth, reducing it to a superficial object of consumption” (ibid) which then, tends to find expression in myriad ways, not all of which are an acknowledgment of life’s inherent dignity.

Hence, what are the earthly desires patriarchies trigger at this layer? In contrast to healing, patriarchies weave a narrative that fuels the need for victims and, consequently, triggers the feminist narratives for survivors.

When the sexual-familial layer is identified as just below the skin. The narratives of survivor and victimhood can thus be expressed through the metaphorical thickness of a woman’s skin; a barometer of the shield she has developed over time, waging battles; winning some and loosing others. It is here that the sentinel nature of feminisms seeks, and finds, nourishment and intensifies its defensive posturing. In the context of this analysis, the development of a thick-skin is perceived as key to being able to navigate the
inherent systemic and cultural violence of patriarchal structures. Victimhood is built on the previously mentioned, untransformed, hunger of helplessness, on the one hand and perceiving oneself as a liability on the other. In a similar vein, the narrative of a survivor is built on feeding the “superwoman” paradigm and perceiving oneself as a rebel. Two sides of the same coin. Both cases, require or result, in the suppressing of sensitivity, that is a person’s ability to feel (literally and figuratively).

Thus, what can transformation feel like?

Meeting external stimuli at the sexual-familial layer, in spiritual awareness means the development of a person’s sensitivity, openness and empathy with love, compassion and devotion. On a more tangible level, this translates into selective-authenticity or selective-porosity to external stimuli. Being responsive as appose to reactive. Based on the analysis made in the previous sections, this means as the subversive act of allowing one’s self to feel consciously vulnerable. In this manner, spiritual awareness identifies the need to heal to be intrinsically connected with the need to feel. And, as such, in turn persuades a re-acquaintance of the self with her vulnerability. Without practicing selective-vulnerability, a person’s spiritual practice carries the danger of becoming hermetic. In such an instance, it ceases to be spiritual and falls once again into the miasma of ignorance. The practice of a spiritually aware, selective-vulnerability ensures the functioning of a dynamic homeostasis, in correspondence and resonance. To choose to practise vulnerability, is to choose to feel, it is choosing the personal to be political.

Thus, having established the transformations at each layer, moving outwards, from the point of entry, the analysis arrives once again at the episode.

3.1.7. Dance of the Persona | Transforming Fear

In spiritual awareness she breathes,
Breathe is an expression...of the moving nature of life energy. Breathe is movement: the relative expansion of the body's contact boundaries in inhalation and their contraction in exhalation. This spatial dimension is accompanied by a temporal one expressed by the rhythm of breathing. And, finally, breathe also has a qualitative dimension. Breathing is an existential action at the contact boundary involving space, time and power. It is not only necessary to survival, but also for experience; that is, the subjective experience of a situation not only expresses itself through the breath, but is also determined in a circular fashion by the function of the breath (ibid, 45).

Earthly desires at peace with themselves breathe easy. In this process of an unfolding grounded in a journey of an ever-expanding, spiritual awareness, a person moves patiently, towards practicing love, compassion and devotion, with selective-vulnerability, openness and empathy. In other words, she chooses to practice the way of Buddhahood, that is the dynamic practice for one’s self and others. In doing so, she transcends the dualities of an ignorant hunger, and viewing herself as part of the systemic whole, she breathes life into her “internal-observer” (ibid, 220). Here, the whole, is identified as the All-one, or ātmān that is bigger than the family, the community and the society. She transcends the duality of feeding the self-image of perceiving herself as a liability or a rebel. She just is. She is here, in the now, able to perceive herself “...in a loving fashion, without judgement, comparison, reward, or punishment. The internal observer is conscious of...her existence” (ibid).

3.2. Spiritual Awareness – The Cause

Revolutions are not won over night, they take time and effort. And quite possibly to paraphrase, Krishnamurti and Ikeda, a human revolution is the most potent of them all.
Grounded as it is in the person waking up to the inherent dignity of her life and applying herself towards realizing that dignity through her thoughts, words and actions in her daily life. Earthly desires of the higher-self. The metaphor of “flowing water”, is instructional here; when applied to the awakened sense of earthly desires, means a patient, steady revolution taking place over time, within and without, requiring earnest effort, negotiating, finding loop holes, slowly eroding and transforming structures that do not serve its harmonic expression; like a river, this human revolution is patient, unceasing, and relentless, moving forward, ever forward, without regressing. Juxtaposed against an ignorant hunger which, when repressed for too long, induces a revolution which bursts forth every couple of years, to consume everything in its path, leading to an eventual loss of its life force and becoming dormant. Through this metaphor I attempt to highlight the potentiality of spiritual awareness in transforming humanity’s despondency. Humanity stands at a crossroad wherein it requires a “turning point” or a fundamental shift in its attitude towards fulfilling its needs and desires. “Thinking about and understanding the nature of a turning point requires a capacity to locate ourselves in an expansive, not a narrow view of time. Elise Boulding suggested that such a view of time must take place within what we touch and know but never be limited to a fleeting moment that passes us by. In a provocative twist of terms she created an intriguing image: We live in a “two-hundred-year present” (as quoted in Lederach 2005, 22). Women and men alike can either choose to remain passively aware or actively apply themselves towards practicing the bodhisattvā way. By choosing to do the latter, seeds are sown for transformations in the future.

38 “Boulding suggests we calculate “the present” by subtracting the date of birth of the oldest person we have known in our lives from the projected passing-on date of the youngest person in our family...This is [your] 200-year present. It is made up of the lives that touched [you] and of those [you] will touch. The 200-year present represents [your] lived history. It is in this sense of “the present” that we need to locate ourselves in order to understand the nature of the turning point” (Lederach 2005, 23).
3.2.1. The Bōdhisattva Spirit: The Effect

By undertaking this layer analysis on the basis of Elicitive Conflict Mapping, the thesis addresses the crux of the research question, that is, *how does a woman's spiritual awareness elicit a deeper, clearer understand of her hunger instinct, thereby harmonizing her feminism?*

The inquiry now moves from the intrapersonal to the interpersonal. For the Bodhisattvā way can only be practiced in relation to one's environment. This is the path that applies the concept of dependent origination.

One of the key teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism is the idea of dependent origination, that the world is woven of the relatedness of life to life. This understanding of interconnection can enable us to [transform the most intractable hunger] into [an opportunity] to elevate and ennoble our lives and the lives of others [emphasis added]. But mere intellectual awareness of interconnection is not enough to effect this positive transformation. “When we bow to a mirror, the figure in the mirror bows back to us in reverence.” As this quote illustrates, it is only when we sense and treasure in others a dignity as valued and irreplaceable as that in our own lives that our interconnection becomes palpable. It is then that the [vulnerabilities] we exchange spark in each of us a courageous will to live (Ikeda 2015, 5).

This means the extent to which a person is able to realise her potential, is intrinsically tied to the extent to which she consciously supports the journey of others in their quest to understand and nourish theirs. Put another way, the extent (and impact) of a single person’s human revolution is intrinsically tied to the action she takes. This conscious expansion of the state of one's life, results in perceiving earthly desires as a *means*, a seeking spirit in the service of humanity at large.
By grasping this, the thesis inquiry finds an answer to the second part of the of the research question, how does a woman’s spiritual awareness elicit a deeper, clearer understand of her hunger instinct, thereby harmonizing her feminism, and facilitating belonging in the here and now?

On one level, practices in spiritual awareness require the person to develop the ability to become mindful of the moment-to-moment condition or quality of one’s breathing. This organically results in the person becoming located her here and now. The nature of this belonging is characterised by the strength of one’s practice. It allows her to stand in resonance with her self and her environment. Secondly, this allows the person to perceive belonging as a process-oriented feeling that comes alive through her body. In this worldview, contrary to modern thought, belonging in not reduced to a physical place. It can be realized by striving to manifest the life state of wisdom, courage and compassion identified as the bodhisattvā way. Furthermore, it is only through continued practice, over time, that spiritual awareness acquires the in depth and dimension to gradually spread and trigger transformations on all the layers of a person’s being. Mani (2016) states, “[spiritual] practices such as prayer, meditation, chanting and worship are intended to focus and still our minds, in order that we may understand how our notion of ‘I’ comes into being. The purpose is to transform our relationship to it. The process necessarily engages the social context out of which one’s sense of self and world are crafted” (145-146). That is to say, they necessitate an active sense of belonging in relation to the context a person is functioning in and out of.

On a tertiary level, therefore, such a belonging results in a “[...]moral imagination [which cultivates] the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies [emphasis added]; the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; the fundamental belief in and pursuit of
the creative act; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of [an ignorant hunger]” (Lederach 2005, 5). Functioning from within a dysfunctional system that is overwhelmingly imbalanced by relational insecurity, structural injustice and competing cultural truths, such an action seems impossible. However, herein, lies the true challenge of a moral imagination; once again, manifesting the courage, to perceive the inherent dignity in the lives of those who attempt to deny it.

At the limit point, viewed from the perspective of Buddhism, Śākyāmuni covered hundreds of miles on foot intent on conducting dialogue on the magnificence of life with as many people as possible. He found belonging in his mission, which lay under his feet. “In general, Buddhism is viewed as a static religion, epitomized by the image of a meditating or sitting Buddha. But the actual Śākyāmuni was quite different. The true image of Śākyāmuni is that of a dynamic, walking Buddha, an active Buddha” (Ikeda 2013, 224) located in the now.

The power of now is all that human beings really have. An ignorant hunger tends to get lost in the narratives of the past or the fear of the future. Engaging with human beings, as a human being, requires authentic presence, a constant back and forth which is a fundamental characteristic of human life. Thus, how much significance does the now acquire in the manner one chooses to show up, and the life state she chooses to function from? These decisions colour the intentions of her personal and how they find expression in the political. From this perspective of one life, carries the potential to create tremendous waves of transformation in the lives of the people it comes into contact with at all levels39.

39 With reference to Lederach’s triangle.
I feel it is important to mention once again, that any spiritual practice is an iterative process, can be symbolized by the following quote, “from the indigo, an even deeper blue” (SGI 1999, 457). That is to say, the in the act of repetition lies a deepened sense of belonging in the here and now, allowing one's roots to sink deeper within her. In conclusion, “[an] embodied spirituality requires an aesthetic attitude to the world that is central to self-nurturance, to the nurturance of others, and to the nurturance of the world itself. Embodied spirituality requires an understanding that nature is not inanimate and less than human, but animated and more than human. It requires pleasure, joy in the bodily connection with earth and air, sea and sky, plants and animals—and the recognition that they are all more than human, more than any human beings could ever achieve. Embodied spirituality is more than spiritual experience. It is an ethical relationship to the physical world” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 566). It is the bodhisattvā way.
4. The Sacred-Plurality of the Many Sītās

Even if I am called uncompromising that doesn't bother me in the least. Everything hinges on how I can manifest in society not some minor talent, but the resilient power of my inner determination. (Ikeda 2014, 32)

4.1. Why engage with the Rāmāyana?

While the previous chapter attempts to comment on the cause and effect of cultivating spiritual awareness on the nature of hunger that emanates at each layer and manifests through the intrapersonal themes of sexual desire, social belonging and the mental consciousness, this chapter endeavours to unpack the impact of the same on the corresponding interpersonal themes, of personal harmony, structural justice, relational security and cultural truths, by focussing on the peace families. It does this through the iconography of Sītā.

At the core of this research inquiry lies the journey towards self-actualization of a spiritually aware woman functioning within the context of north India. This, in my opinion, cannot be attempted without exploring how Indian spiritual traditions make themselves known with respect to women inhabiting its geography, in today’s time. However, given the depth and dimension of the country, and its civilizational character, it also demands a narrowing down that corresponds with the frame of this research inquiry. While, this has already been attempted, in parts, in the preceding chapters, this chapter focusses on this aspect in its entirety.
Given that the thesis is primarily situated within the relational dynamics of the family, in the larger geography of north India, this naturally turns the focus on the Indian epics and the manner in which they continue to trigger or influence the lives of the collective. “[...] both epics [the Rāmāyana and the Māhābhāratā] speak of dharmā, which means human potential, not righteous conduct: the of best of what [one] can do in continuously changing social contexts, with no guarantees or certainties, as [one] is being constantly and differently judged by the subject, the object and innumerable witnesses. In [the latter], the protagonist is kingmaker who can move around rules, while in the [former] the protagonist is a king who much uphold rules, howsoever distasteful they may be” (Pattanaik 2013, v). Both weave narratives of how female characters respond, react, negotiate, mitigate, and mediate their realities as a consequence of decisions being made in their environment. The question of which epic to choose condenses down to the present moment.

From the perspective of the peace families, this means consciously observing the temperaments of the narratives which are making themselves known through the personae within the family, community and society and sharply discerning those which are conspicuous by their absence. Such an approach leads the inquiry to identify the overlapping narratives of morality (religion), modernity (nation state) and post-modernity (feminisms) subsuming the narratives of harmony (balance). Currently, what one senses is a palpable tension between the themes of structural justice, relational security and cultural truths, which is further exacerbated through the use of the Rāmāyana as tool to mobilise actors. “Modern scholarship has been unable to classify the Rāmāyana. Is it actually history, as right-wing scholars insist? Is it propaganda literature serving the interests of particular social groups, as left-wing scholars insist? Is it the story of God, as the devotees believe it is? Or is it the map of the human mind, an attempt to
explain the human condition?” (Pattanaik 2013, xvii). To unpack the Rāmāyana in its entirety would result in multiple dissertations of its own, as is evident through the innumerable literature that already exists.

In the previous chapter, by applying the method of ECM mapping, we were able to detect the outward impact of developing an inner practice of personal harmony on transforming imbalanced earthly desires which make themselves apparent through the layers of the person, in a context specific to women. Continuing this line of inquiry, in this chapter we endeavour to analyse these imbalanced earthly desires at level of the collective through Sītā’s story; the primary female character in the epic Rāmāyana.

What follows, is first, the presentation of the story in its generic form in order to facilitate a common understanding, followed by concise telling of how I perceive its relevance to the research inquiry. This, is then followed by an analysis of Sītā’s story through the prism of each peace family, with the explicit purpose of identifying the manner in which the same myth is repurposed and re-presented in different contexts to feed desires of differing political persuasions in the now. Furthermore, the analysis endeavours to highlight how each peace family contributes in a particular way to the overall understanding of the power this story continues to have on the psyche of people in India. “There are [roughly] three dominant trends of approaching the various [tellings]...first, the modern gaze (‘only the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki in Sanskrit is valid); second, the postmodern gaze (‘all [Rāmāyanas] are equally valid’); third, the post-postmodern [arguably, in one sense the transrational] gaze (‘respect the gaze of the believer’)” (ibid).

To make the analysis relatable, within the purview of each peace family, I attempt to provide examples of Indian women from the present context, who I believe embody the overarching narrative of that particular peace family. Finally, the aim of this chapter is to,
on the one hand, highlight the absence of a singular narrative and on the other, to showcase the how the internal world (of a woman's hunger) is a simultaneous reflection and cause of the narratives coming alive externally. In the ensuing peace family based analysis, parallels can be drawn to the layered analysis in chapter 3. Sītā provides an appropriate tool on the basis of which the layered analysis of the causes and impact of hunger gain more grounding. Furthermore, based on how a person relates to the story and imagery of Sītā a lot can be deduced about the worldview that lies at the core of their conception of the world and therefore the hunger that drives it. This effectively points to the continuing relevance of the epics as a medium that can coexist alongside modern and post-modern tools of analysis to develop a sharper and more nuanced understanding of the human condition in India— which, at the end of the day, is a construct, comprising of human beings, their desires and aspirations.

4.2. Who is Sītā?

Sītā is the wife of Rām, the story of whom the Rāmāyana tells. This is how most of India, especially north India knows her. Thus, what follows is an engagement with the popular persona of Sītā. A reference to texts or oral traditions is made only insofar to facilitate a more exact understanding. However, it is crucial to keep in mind, that over the course of the past twenty-five hundred years, the epic, written in the form of a poem, “no longer remains a definite ‘work’ but [has become], instead a whole genre or tradition, ‘a series of translations clustering around one or another in a family of texts,’ in which ‘no text is original, yet no telling is a mere retelling—and the story has no closure, although it may be enclosed in a text” (Dharwadker 2004, 128). I believe, in its essence, this explanation describes the human existence, which, the epic poem is a commentary on. By extension, therefore, there is no ‘original’ Sītā. Every Sītā, in each telling, is a part of the larger whole
and yet retains its own particularity in relation to itself and the whole, in the overall framework particular to that telling. Keeping the location of the research inquiry in mind, i.e. north India, the telling, I rely on most is the one that governs the popular imagination, Vālmīki’s Rāmāyana written in Sanskrit. To facilitate a common understanding, what I present below, is the story in its most basic (popular) form—the form, which almost, everyone on the Indian geography can narrate.

4.2.1. The Basic Story

Rām, the eldest son and prince of Ayodhyā wins the hand the beautiful princess Sītā, but is exiled to fourteen years of forest-dwelling, as a result of a tragic plot borne off an envious stepmother (who wants the throne for her own son), along with Sītā and his brother Lakshmana. While living in the forest a series of events culminate in Sītā transgressing the protective boundary, created by Lakshmana, and being taken hostage by the King of Lanka, Rāvanā—masquerading as an ascetic seeking alms. Rām, with the help of his brother Lakshmana and friend Hanūmān, assembles a forest army, and sets out to vanquish Rāvana and rescue his abducted wife. The allies attack Lanka, a war ensues. After losing his brother and sons, Rāvana is eventually defeated by Rām, and killed. Sītā has been saved. However, upon approaching her husband, Sītā is instructed to prove her chastity by undergoing a test by fire (agniparīkṣā). Sītā enters the flames and stands vindicated by the heavenly deities (especially Agni Devī, the deity of fire). Having proved her fidelity she can now retake her husband’s side. The trio, Sītā, Rām and Lakshmana, (along with Hanūmān) return to Ayodhyā, inaugurating the Rām’s just rule, Rām-rāj, as a golden age for human kind. Unfortunately, peace is short-lived. Gossip surrounding the fidelity of the Queen held in captivity engulfs the crown. The citizens of Ayodhyā begin to doubt the honour of the throne. For Rām, the scion of the Raghu Clan, reputation is paramount—it is connected to
legitimacy. He instructs Lakshmana to take Sitā to the forest and leave her there. Thus, initiating another period of separation. A disgruntled Lakshmana, unhappy with this decision and his part in it, carries out the diktat of his elder brother, leaving and instructing his sister-in-law to remain in the forest. Unbeknownst to Rām or Lakshmana, Sitā is pregnant with twins. At this point, Sitā finds refuge in Vālmiki’s ashram, where she gives birth. [It is important to note, even though he has composed an epic poem on the life of Rām, he is unaware of the identities of the woman taking refuge in his ashram and along with her children.] Years pass, and the twins, Luv and Kush, finally meet their father in court having poignantly defeated his most powerful warriors and army while in battle. Seeing his wife and sons Ram attempts to persuade Sitā to rejoin him as his Queen. Sitā, having had enough of the world of men, chooses to go back where she came from. She requests mother earth to take her back, thereby choosing her own dignified exit from the human world.

As is evident through this very basic narration, even from Rām's perspective, Sitā is the vehicle upon which Vālmīki propels change, or in more literary terminology forwards the plot. It is important to note, one of the central themes in the epic poem is the act of choosing and allowing others to do the same. For Rāvanā, the main antagonist, his is the only choice that matters – a very individual (modern) perception of the self. For Rām, one can argue, there is no choice, he is the prince and then king, rules govern his conduct – a moral idea of the self. For Sitā, choice determines her actions, which are aimed at upholding the dignity of life, and subsequently, these choices, define the trajectory and the manner in which Rām’s story unfolds (this can be perceived as an energetic view). No matter which world view one is functioning out of, it is in how one chooses to behave, in relation to herself and her environment, that the wheels of cause and effect are kept in perpetual motion – defining the predominant narrative at any given point in time. Within
the frame of the epics, the reader is constantly reminded of the folly of an ignorant mind, one that does not seek spiritual awareness. This in Hinduism is identified as the cause and effect of the unending cycle of human suffering. With this in mind, the inquiry now proceeds to deconstruct Sītā's persona from the perspective of each peace family.

4.3. The Energetic Sītā: The Divine Feminine

To understand the Divine Sītā it is necessary to travel to the point of her birth, which, in my opinion, is similar to the lore of bodhisattvas, she emerges from the earth. Her father, King Janaka (of Mithila) finds her in a furrow (the meaning of sītā), when partaking the annual ritual of ploughing the fields. Pattanaik explains here, “[furrows] do not exist in nature. Furrows indicate agriculture, the birth of human civilization. Sītā then embodies the fruit of nature’s domestication and the rise of human culture” (10). In this way Sītā can perceived as the goddess of fertility. Ramachandra Gandhi (1992) goes one step further to describe Sītā has the Divine Mother, which can be seen as the coming together of the Great Mother and the Great Goddess40 (Dietrich 2012). Therefore, from this perspective, the above-mentioned corporeal Sītā is one embodiment of Shakti41 the divine energy that is the cosmos. This by extension makes Rām the corporeal embodiment of Shiva—Shakti’s harmonizing, form-giving principle (which, also emanates from her). In this telling, everything is a manifestation and expression of the Divine Mother. Within the genre, this telling of the Rāmāyana is called the Adhyātma Rāmāyana. In this framework, Rām exemplifies the male aspect—which represents the mind, the world of the ephemeral, and Sītā the female aspect—which embodies nature, the world of matter. It is

40 “Ken Wilber...introduces a path-breaking distinction. For the mother image in its natural-biological aspects he uses the Great Mother and for the mother image in its transcendental and mystical aspects Great Goddess” (Dietrich 2012, 21).
41 “[... the Sītā [Upanishad] of the Atharva Veda...affirms the reality of Sītā as Brahman, Ground of Being, source of all manifestation” (Gandhi 1992, 113).
only when the latter comes together with the former that the formless acquires form. Within this system, Rāvanā is not an antagonist, but a person, who despite having vast amounts of knowledge is unable to expand his mind towards witnessing the divine union of Shiva and Shakti as the underlying energy principle of the universe.

In hermetic traditions, Shiva exemplifies internal harmony of the highest order, without professing the need to engage with the larger world. Here, Sītā (Shakti) brings Rām (Shiva) out of this isolated existence by persuading him to expend that energy, in an aware and conscious manner, in service of the Brahman. This transitions him, from the life of a hermit, towards the life of a householder; expressed through the epic poem in a more relatable form.

Thus, within the frame of ECM mapping, the aforementioned imagery presents a worldview that conceives *everything* to be a manifestation of this Divine Energy. Here the key lies in the unification of opposites, the bridging of divisions, oppositions, separations and polarisations through the act (and art) of balancing, or practicing a dynamic homeostasis. Also, understanding, that within this worldview, whether the person is practicing awareness or not, she is part of the overall system's tendency to find balance. If this understanding is applied to the present world, this telling points towards the path of beginning in personal harmony at an interpersonal level, towards the dynamic creation and maintenance of relational security, structural justice and cultural truths. Over the course of this research inquiry, I did not come across any academics inclined to perceive the Rāmāyana, let alone Sītā in this manner. As has already been discussed previously, recognising the Divine Mother, requires the dissolution of an ‘I’ in opposition to ‘you’ paradigm; it necessitates perceiving and acknowledging the (divine) ‘I’ in the (divine) ‘you’ and vice versa, (best exemplified by the word *namaste*—of course, beyond the purview of an hour long yoga class).
In India currently, such a worldview continues to be perceived as esoteric. Although it elicits curiosity owing to the mysterious nature of Shakti and the overarching principle of the Divine Feminine energy, it is unable to find anchorage in a familial setting. The reasons for this are many, suffice to say from the perspective of this thesis, such a worldview within an Indian context, organically implies, a dissociation from all earthly desires, and the pursuit of life as an ascetic or hermit. While, from one perspective, such a woman is spiritually aware and has been able to harmonise of her hunger (earthly desires) to find belonging in the here and now; she has done so by transcending her earthly desires all together—this way lies in direct opposition to the path of the householder. It should be unsurprising therefore, that given the more pervasive narratives of the ideal woman, this is not the way of spiritual awareness exercised by most women.

Nevertheless, even if one chooses not to adopt this path in its entirety, this genre of tellings does present a certain takeaway, which can be adopted if one is so inclined. While attempting to live a life of a spiritually aware woman in India, this Sītā asks the person to find the courage to acknowledge the divine in the male chauvinist, and reflexively, acknowledge the potentiality of the same within her. This is an intensely radical requirement in today’s times. Needless to say, within the Indian context, very few feminist academics, except for Lata Mani, have attempted to give voice and form to this discourse. This Sītā and her earthly desires exist, if only, somewhat elusively.

4.4. The Moral Sītā: The Goddess Exemplar

With morality, this analysis turns towards the image of Sītā within a “sanitised, codified and caste-ridden” (Mani 2016, 8) Hinduism. The moral Sītā is the embodiment of the ideal
Hindu woman⁴²; the ideal daughter, the ideal (male-heir producing) wife and the ideal mother-in-law. Unlike her energetic counter-part, she is placed on a divine pedestal, outside the realm of an impure, but nevertheless, interconnected world of humans. Within Hindu mythology this presents a shift, where all though Shakti still exists we witness the creation of the ‘holy trinity’ in Brahma (the creator), Shiva (the destroyer) and Vishnu (the preserver). Consequently, each male god is assigned a female goddess-consort, Saraswati (the goddess of knowledge, music and art), Parvati (the goddess of love and devotion) and Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth and material fortune).

The moral Sītā is the incarnation of goddess Lakshmi and by extension, the consort of Rāma (the incarnation of Vishnu). In this persona, Sītā’s choices symbolise the epitome of a devoted wife.

[...]In north India [this is] the Sita of popular imagination [who is] deeply influenced by the Sita of Ramcharit Manas by Tulsi. In most other [tellings] of the Ramayan, close companionship and joyful togetherness of the couple are the most prominent features of the Ram-Sita relationship rather than her self-effacing devotion and loyalty which have become the hallmark of the modern day [moral] stereotype of Sita. The medieval Ramayan of Tulsi marks the transition from Ram and Sita being presented as an ideal couple to projecting each of them as an ideal man and woman respectively. As a maryada purushottam⁴³, Ram’s conjugal life has to be sacrificed at the altar of “higher” duties. Sita is now portrayed in a highly focused manner as an ideal wife who acts as the moral anchor in a marriage, and stays unswerving in her loyalty and righteousness no matter how ill-matched be her husband’s response. The power of the ideal wife archetype in Tulsi’s Ramayan

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⁴² This is an upper-class, upper-caste Hindu woman.
⁴³ The supreme upholder of the rules. (author’s translation)
overshadows the happy conjugal life of the couple prior to Ram’s rejection of Sita (Kishwar 1997, 20).

The ideal Hindu woman is judged against the standards prescribed to this Sītā; dualities begin to emerge; professed in the form of right and wrong, good and evil, true and false and strong and weak. These dualities find expression in the everyday conduct of an Hindu woman, towards herself, her family, community and society. Here, Sītā becomes the goddess consort, her existence becomes intrinsically tied to Rām’s, and thus, in the real world, this is reflected in the dedication and devotion which has come to be expected from an ideal Hindu woman, especially towards her marital household. “The supremacy of the family over the individual is reinforced by the gender ideology of Hindutva. The rashtrasevikas⁴⁴ [imply] that family considerations should reign supreme in marriage and career choice...” (Basu et al 1993, 78).

Here, the benevolence that has come to be expected from gods and goddesses is exemplified in the sacrificial behaviour of woman towards themselves at the altar of the greater good, the family. The inability of human beings to embody this ideal is attributed to the epoch (yug) we are living in, what Hindu terminology calls, kalyug, (the epoch of rampant corruption). Which is characterised by the prevalence of evil identified as greed, anger and foolishness.

While the narrative of kalyug, is used to externalise and justify the structural injustices within a moral world, Sītā’s endurance is on the one hand expected as a trait amongst women and tends to find reflection in the manner many bear a silent witness to the course of their lives. In today’s time, this imagery of Sītā is seen most prominently in the propaganda and rhetoric of the right-wing variant of Hinduism, Hindutva. For

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⁴⁴ Women working in service of the Hindu nation. (*author’s translation*) Terminology used by the right-wing Hindu outfits to describe Hindu women, in the imagery of Sītā, dedicating their lives towards forwarding the agenda of a great Hindu nation (*Hindu Rashtra*).
example, with respect “...to Sita’s chastity and its influence on true Hindu wives. [An ideologue argues, that it is] only the certainty that Sita’s precepts are being followed that enables traders and businessmen to go away on long business trips with an untroubled heart” (Basu et al 1999, 79). Externally, given that Sītā is the divine goddess, her honour needs to be protected by invaders and marauders (non-Hindu communities). Internally, an attempt is made to subsume all narratives into a single stream of Brahmanical Hinduism45, which is considered the only narrative worth preserving and transmitting forward. This translates into, the only honour is that of the upper-caste and upper-class women, which demands the service off the remaining castes and classes.

If women see themselves in Sītā, then the imagery of Rām has been mobilised to manipulate and exploit sexuality in the form of motherhood on one hand, and womanhood on the other, especially towards galvanising women primarily from upper-caste, middle-class Hindu families against non-Hindu communities. “The Ramayana...resonates with the many losses of Rama: he loses his kingdom, his father, he is separated from his mothers and his brothers and then he loses Sita—he is a figure bathed in tears...The entire series of deprivations [is]... collapsed into the shape of that irresistible human idol—the deprived male infant...While the Ramlalla46 appeals to the mother in [women], the warrior Ram...simultaneously arouses a response to an aggressive male sexuality” (ibid, 82). It is a common assumption that the moral worldview is a heteronormative one. In a similar fashion the previously mentioned invincible female-strength is aggregated into the militant iconography of Durga, “who subsumes [Sita], Saraswati, Lakshmi and Kali” (ibid, 83).

46 “Baby Rām” (author’s translation).
Thus the moral Sītā is the vehicle that feeds the realization of the dream of a great unified Hindu Rashtra.

4.5. The Modern Sītā: A Master Strategist

This is the Sītā I find to be most prevalent in the lives of the women and men around me. The modern worldview continues to perpetuate the diktats of dualities, however they are also rationalised — gods are replaced by the modern nation state. Within the Indian context this finds a curious expression. The deities are never forgotten, they are intrinsically woven into the fabric of the human condition, as has been mentioned before. While modernity is characterised by the notion that “the universe functions like a machine” (Álvarez 2014, 62), by extension then so does the human condition, and therefore, can be improved upon in a linear progression, towards perfection— at the final stage, “Indian women (and men) [feel] that the ideals set in bygone ages are still valid and worth emulating… Ram and Sita are not seen as remote figures out of a distant past to be dismissed lightly just because we are living in a different age and have evolved different lifestyles. They are living role models seen as having set standards so superior that they are hard to emulate for those living in our more “corrupt” age, the kalyug” (Kishwar 1997, 22). Given that the modern nation state is organised around the idea of property and its transference from generation to generation in an attempt to achieve immortality (of some kind), the modern Sītā plays her part in this endeavour towards perfection.

However, she must not be mistaken for the moral Sītā in need of rescue or one accepting the actions of her husband without complain. The modern Sītā is motivated by a superior dharma (in this case meaning righteous action), even to that of Rām’s, one that exhibits the potential to put the ideal man to shame. In the modern frame, the drive for superiority comes from within. She is in a moral competition with Rām and must emerge
victorious—this is her primary hunger. These are no longer, two halves of a larger whole or an aspirational ideal. The modern Sītā presents a checklist for women in their drive towards marital perfection. For example, from the perspective of the various familial roles Sītā plays, “[she] is the darling of... her mother-in-law, who constantly mourns Sita’s absence from Ayodhya. She worries about her more than she does for her son... she is everyone’s dream of an ideal, loving daughter-in-law... Her father-in-law... and... three brother-in-laws dote on her” (ibid, 23). From the perspective of her agnipariksha, “[she] emerges as a woman that even [the] fire god...dare not touch or harm” (ibid, 23) her character and therefore, word is unimpeachable. “Ram has at least some enemies... [He] can become angry and act the role of an avenger. Sita is love and forgiveness incarnate and has no ill feelings even for those who [kept] her in...captivity... She is a woman who even the gods revere, a woman who refuses to accept her husband’s tyranny even while she remains steadfast in her love...and loyalty to him to the very end... Sita’s steadfastness [is commonly perceive] as a sign of emotional strength and not slavery, because she refuses to forsake her dharma even though Ram forsook his as a husband” (ibid, 24).

Much like the maneuverings of a nation-state at the world stage, this Sītā in the modern frame, recognizes that legitimacy (and therefore power), in an Indian marriage can only be accrued through the nature of the alliances (relationships) she is able to build and sustain not only in her immediate marital home, but also the extended kinship group. In some ways, this is an ingenious way of setting up a support system, that is independent of the husband and surreptitiously, diminishes his power in the larger familial set up. As is evident, such behavior points to the absence of relational security. Although, by being perceived as above-and-beyond reproach, this Sītā is able to find some personal harmony, and recognition of her truths, even if the structure isn’t entirely just. The modern Sītā is a
master strategist (playing the strings of victim and survivor to perfection), who recognizes realities of an Indian marriage in north India.

4.6. The Post-Modern Subaltern Feminist Sītās

Post-colonialism combined with feminist movements have produce innumerable avatars of Sītā. The narratives present the Rāmāyana in Sītā’s voice and through her gaze. For the first time, the listener or reader is made to “see things as wronged woman would, and feel along with her – for the sheer waste and violence that wrongful pride and war bring about” (Arni and Chitrakar 2015, 151). In addition, feminist tellings, mostly of the oral tradition, bring other female characters to the fore. For example, Volga’s *The Liberation of Sita* (2016), is written in the form of five conversations Sītā has with five distinct female characters, during her second sojourn in the forest. Each conversation is a dialogue on the world of men, and how Sītā was blind to the pain of these women before, but now, having suffered at the hands of her husband is able to deeply empathize with them. Volga weaves a female solidarity through her narrative and drives home the point of feminist Sītās; women *always* experience and thus view the world different from men—and therefore, by extension, read the Rāmāyana different from men.

Feminist sītās are also aware of the pain that accompanies the entitlements that come their way as a result of their caste status, that of a brahmin woman and the manner in which their identity is used to divide and rule; pitting them against lower caste women. Through the plurality of these sītās, women are able to recover their agency, not only in terms of finding their voice, but also their sexuality. “[...] agency in these [tellings] is connected with [not only women] being able to tell their own story [but also] its being heard” (Dharwadker 2004, 426).
Overall, feminist sītās are united in an unspoken solidarity against the excesses of a male world. By following the multiple stories through their innumerable tellings common themes emerge; feminist sītās are “essentially empathetic. [As understanding] of what has befallen [them] renders [them] open to what other women endure” (Arni and Chitrakar 2015, 151). Furthermore, they reclaim the (until now forgotten) energetic principle of the Mother Goddess, staking control over their ability to nurture and generate life. Thus, creating a space which empowers women to be articulate and assertive with respect to the trajectory of their lives. This is especially evident in “the use of the word shakti [being] incorporated into the Indian women’s movement, rich as its ambiguity is, implying 'power' or 'energy' and also referring to the [Mother] Goddess” (Hansen 1988, 26). It is important to note, this solidarity does not come at the price of suppressing divergent viewpoints.

In conclusion, the key hunger among feminist sītās is the narration of their particular truths. Which, more often than not oscillate, like their modern compatriots, between Sītā—the victim and Sītā—the survivor. However, these are post-modern sītās, so they exist in critique of their modern paradigms. Their personal becomes political.

4.7. The Transrational Sītā asks: Can All The Sītās Coexist?

To paraphrase Spivak47, I feel the time has come, to not only ask, can the sītās speak, but also, can they coexist? The principle of the five peace families and the layers within ECM mapping provides the viewer different vantage points through which to gauge a particular episode in space and time, in order to discern one’s next move within the complex system of human existence. First, transrationality bases itself out of the multiplicity of truths, so not only do the feminist sītās exist, but so do the moral, modern, and energetic. This is not

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47 Referencing Gayatri Spivak’s seminal essay, written in 1983, entitled, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”
a comparative analysis or judgement; no one Sītā is better than the other, they all are a reflection of the diverse worldviews emanating from the geography currently identified as India—within which, I have chosen to focus on a very small component. In fact, it is my assessment and belief, that if the entirety of the Indian subcontinent were to be taken into account many more sītās, within the frame of each peace family, would emerge. Subsequently, taking rationality into account, transrationality moves to harmonize the dualities, thereby reintroducing two important elements; all existence is part of a larger whole—the Brahman, and vice versa, the larger whole can be found in all existence. Therefore, whether one chooses to acknowledge it or not, there is an inherent, dynamic, homeostasis at play.

A Sītā, who is able to consciously hold the existence of the other four in this dynamic equilibrium, in a practice of correspondence and resonance—without favouring one over the other, while being able to perceive them as a potentiality within herself and simultaneously part of a larger systemic whole, is actualising a transrational worldview through her lived reality and potentially paving a way for coexistence. Crucially, this Sītā’s harmonised internal dynamic is reflected through a healthy expression of sexual desire, social belonging and mental consciousness; finding external resonance in the interpersonal themes of personal harmony, relational security, structural justice and cultural truths. She fundamentally understands the transient nature of all phenomenon and thus, knows that the practice of transrationality is a personal and political choice, one undertaken in conscious wakefulness. In such a manner, she is also able to understand the needs of the moment and act accordingly, in a manner that carries the potentiality to elicit transformation, from within and without. This is, at its core, “...a lifelong quest in search of the dynamic balance in which ethical moments may manifest as characteristic of aesthetic ones, and aesthetic moments as a topic of ethical ones. Harmony may be a
function of security, security one of justice, justice one of truth, which in turn can only exist in harmony” (Dietrich 2012, 268).

This is a worldview that allows for the convergence, collision and emergence of the needs of the many sītās' anew. It does so, while aiming to discern the causes and effects behind their existence; at the same time understanding, that the means of their transformation are to be found within the system they are emerging from. On a basic level, these sītās do not need rescuing or empowering from an external force or agency—what they do need are bonds of trust, which allow them to explore the interconnections between their external experiences of personal harmony, relational security, structural justice and cultural truths, and their internal needs of sexual desire, social belonging, mental consciousness and spiritual awareness.

Thus, transrationality can, in my opinion, be distinguished as a nuanced approach towards understanding a women’s existence in India, “...it fills the vacuity that has been left by the displacement of God in modernity and the loss of modern meaning in postmodernity. It allows for spirituality that can be experienced and conveys social warmth. Concepts like love and harmony may again be used for defining [human needs]...At the same time, transrationality threatens, as spiritual teachings of all times and directions have done, to unveil the constructed character of individuality within the manifest world, without filling up the vacuity that God and meaning have left with a new teleology” (ibid).

4.8. What is the meaning of this?

Within the purview of each peace family, each Sītā experiences, embodies and negotiates her hunger differently, this is evident. The crucial component is the element of awareness, which only makes itself explicitly known in the world of harmony, subsequently
reappearing in a transrational worldview. If I view Sitā from a modern Hindu perspective, then the element of spiritual awareness is superfluous, since within this paradigm, the concept of karma is reductive, binding and overwhelmingly negative. Here, a person is born where she is born, as she is born, to atone for the sins of her past life and this is a never-ending narrative which is used to justify the violence perpetrated in the name of caste, class, gender, religion and sexuality. So, spiritually aware or not, the nature and temperament of one's hunger tends to be predictable, as I have attempted to highlight in the analysis above. The post-modern perspectives aim to break the barriers erected by the modern-moral patriarchal paradigms with a call for reclaiming one's hunger — however, this is a rebellion or a resistance, it continues to maintain the aggressive overtones of its counterpart. A person simply experiences much of the same, differently.

Transrational hungers are fundamentally aware of the relational nature of their existence. They know they are at the same time an expression and cause of the system they are inhabiting. These hungers attempt to transcend the dualities of power and resistance with the aim of transforming the very nature in which they negotiate with and experience the world. These sitās perceive themselves to be the starting point, of any change, beginning with an internal reflection on the nature of their internal hungers in relation to the external ones. As I have highlighted earlier, should a person choose to become cognisant of it, their life has a mirroring tendency; one's environment is a reflection of one's self (while one's self is reflected in one's environment), this holds true, at the societal level, as well as the world, and at a limit point the cosmos. All phenomenon is mutually inclusive. This, thus makes, from a transrational perspective, all hungers and all sitās mutually inclusive. By being able to truly grasp the above and subsequently apply it, a woman is able to manifest the moral imagination inherent within the slogan the personal is political, finding belonging in the now.
5. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to answer the question: *how does a woman’s spiritual awareness elicit a deeper, clearer understanding of her hunger instinct, thereby harmonizing her feminism and facilitating belonging, in the here and now?*

I began this journey of unpacking a woman’s hunger instinct, by first, examining the slogan, “the personal is political”, with the aim of understanding the depth of the personal that can be engaged with, beginning in the smallest unit of organisation—the family. This then led the inquiry to define the boundaries of the human hunger instinct for the purposes of this research. This was done by describing it as fundamental drive, towards growth exhibited by all living beings, however in the context of humans acquiring a little more complexity, depth and dimension. The premise of the inquiry lay, on the one hand, on the assumption that a misplaced hunger instinct leads to aggressive, manipulative and competitive tendencies (which are also, simultaneously, a cause and effect of hunger), while on the other hand, they are an expression of the personal. This inquiry points out that such a hunger does not facilitate the overall actualisation of the system; this means, an imbalance is created, wherein some hunger is projected as more important than others. Furthermore, a person’s inability to grow, or fulfil her aims and aspirations fuels more aggression and competition—this is essentially a vicious cycle.

Having identified the parameters of a woman’s hunger instinct, I moved towards examining the Indian context in relation to this idea. Beginning with an acknowledgement of the plurality that is fundamental to India, the inquiry moved to elaborate the manner in which women’s hunger find expression on this geography; that is, the emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects of it. By doing so I once again highlight the multiple ways, within and without, a human being experiences the feeling of hunger, and how it is an essential component to her sense of belonging as an expression of her peace
or peacelessness. I then highlight, how this thesis will function on two levels; at the individual level, as expressed in the engagement with unpacking a person’s hunger instinct, and the level of the collective, through Sītā’s myth as an expression of how women internalise and negotiate their hungers within the multiple patriarchies they inhabit.

Having established the central theme of the research inquiry, I moved forward based on the following line of the reasoning:

- if a person is aware of her hunger, she can understand it;
- if she is able to understand it, she can digest (integrate) it;
- if she is able to integrate it, she can find belonging within herself and therefore, be in harmony with her environment in the here and now.

Keeping in mind, that this is being attempted through the application of a transrational worldview as the methodological approach for this thesis. Where transrationality is defined as transgressing the limits of modernity with a twist. That is, moving ahead with tools of rationality, but not being limited by them. At the same time, conceiving the world as a relational, energetic whole that is at its most functional when in a state of dynamic equilibrium. The person, navigates this system through the conscious practice of correspondence and resonance.

Through chapter two, I aimed to unpacked the meaning of spiritual awareness within the frame of this thesis. I began by commenting on the nature and dimensions of awareness, culminating in an overall sense of self. This was then followed by drawing parallels between a person’s fundamental need for self-respect as an expression of hunger, being an expression of less evolved sense of spiritual awareness. Understanding that respect is an integral characteristic of the personal and finds a strong resonance in the political.
Having established the above, chapter 3 really moves into the heart of the research territory. By applying the methodological tool of Elicitive Conflict Mapping (ECM) as the operationalizing tool of elicitive conflict transformation and a transrational research methodology. I identify the episode as the overt preference for male children within the north Indian context as a starting point for unpacking women's hunger instinct as an expression of self-actualisation. Based on this, the research dives into understanding the depth and dimensions of this hunger instinct, beginning within the frame of a spiritually aware self, i.e. starting at the spiritual-policitary level. The analysis then moves outwards, in a reverse order, analysing the nature of women's hunger on the mental-societal, socioemotional-communal, sexual-familial layers, culminating once again on the persona.

I have attempted to highlight, that by approaching hunger in spiritual awareness, it begins to serve a purpose, which, quite organically makes way for its transformation. Within this frame, influenced by Buddhism, I have identified hunger as earthly desires, in a human being's overall quest towards enlightenment or the pursuit happiness. Through presenting a systematic transformation on each layer a woman is able to transform the closed system (of her being) into a selectively porous one, thereby allowing herself to rebuild trust, by nourishing her need for belonging and heal, by accepting herself as a sexual being. In doing so, she is able to transform her wounds and still maintain a selective vulnerability, relinquishing the need for control and being driven by fear. All these internal changes, manifest themselves in the practice of feminism through love, compassion and devotion, in a sensitive, open and emphatic manner. This in effect, results in the harmonization of the post-modern feminist, to a (transrational) feminist bodhisattva—belonging in the here and now. Such an approach, imbues the personal and therefore the political with fresh rigor and vitality.
In chapter 4 I take this understanding one step further, into the dynamics of the north Indian context, adopting ECM mapping once again within the frame of the peace families to deconstruct the myth and archetype of Sītā, in order to present a more contextual analysis of women's hunger with respect to the larger collective. What ensues is an analysis of Sītā from the prism of each of the peace families. I attempt to draw parallels to chapter 3, in order to highlight how the nature of what is felt internally, is fuelled by and in turn fuels what is happening externally. By exploring the energetic, moral, modern, post-modern and eventually transrational sītās, I have endeavoured to present the personal and political nature of this archetype and the manner in which it presents itself as a credible medium through which to ascertain the nature of women's hunger as an expression of their peace or peacelessness over the course of their lives. Furthermore, in doing so, I have attempted to provide a holistic response to the research question.

Finally, the question boils down to why hunger? In hindsight, I perceive hunger as a medium that can be actualised towards a purpose. Much like notions and ideas of peace, hunger has a universal appeal. It is an expression of the basic human condition, as well as not-so-basic one. It comes in infinite shapes, sizes and forms depending on who is experiencing the hunger (human, animal or plant) and where this hunger is being experienced. The implications are large, as well as they are wide, and within these implications lie possible answers towards deepening one’s understanding of peaces.

Having said that, there also lie limitations to this particular analysis. For one, I believe a similar analysis done from the primary frame of caste, by a woman would produce very different results. My experiences are limited to the manner in which they have made me. However, this line of reasoning sparks further interest within me, and is something I would like to explore in the future. Secondly, my analysis was limited by the limits of my language. I am certain, that reading the Rāmāyana in Hindi or Sanskrit or
Urdu or reading Chandrabatti’s telling would have a very different impact on the manner in which I analyse the archetype through the prisms of the peace families. I extend this line of reasoning to feminist critiques written in non-English languages as well. The tragedy of the matter is, that as a result of being based in north India, I have to rely on English or Hindi translations of South Indian narratives, which have their own shortcomings. Thirdly, as a result of my location and the histories that the Indian geography carries, I have a tendency of being inherently suspicious of person’s claiming to propagate energetic practices within the frame of Hinduism, this is a bias I have been very aware of. This is not to imply that Hinduism, as it is popularly being practiced today, isn’t problematic. It very much is, and the idea of a transrational worldview requires taking cognisance of these ideas, notions and practices which emanate from Hinduism’s moral-modern application.

Finally, feminism is a personal journey, and I feel a time has come where spaces need to be held in which everyone feels invited to share their experiences and ideas of feminism. There is a need to build solidarity, that celebrates the plurality, without judgement. At its essence feminism is a response to chauvinism, but as I have attempted to highlight, it is so much more. It is a personal, exploring the depth of which can become, a lifelong quest of self-discovery and celebration, a person can place at the service of her political should she choose to, with the aim of facilitating the same for others who may want to undertake a similar exploration.
I end this thesis, one of Tagore’s popular poems, which I sometimes felt to be a prayer:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that ... freedom...let my [being] awake
Epilogue

Sītā’s Adventure: An Exploration of her Hero-Zone

“My Sīta” is a woman, an adventure-seeker and explorer. She is spiritually aware—in the constant pursuit of personal harmony within and therefore believes in its reflection without. From my perspective, she chose to emerge from the earth, like she chose to accompany Rām into the forest. Only, in my opinion, whatever may have been the external circumstance that precipitated their forest exile, Rām and Lakshmana were actually accompanying Sītā, on her epic adventure. While this adventure involved the exploits of all three, however, Sītā is the harmonising force, having emerged from the earth she has a visceral understanding of how to negotiate the forest. She is never at war, but approaches the forest and all its dwellers in a sentiment of love, compassion and devotion, with sensitivity, openness and empathy. She is eager to learn, and so she does.

Then one day, while she is alone in her forest hut, an old ascetic makes his way towards her asking for alms. Sītā is aware of the powerful lakshman-rekha48 that surrounds their humble living arrangements and is not alarmed, for she knows she is protected. However, the ascetic requires food and Sītā knows he cannot enter beyond the defined boundary. It is she who must make the decision to step-out. And so, leaving behind everything she knows and is familiar with, Sītā takes the proverbial leap of faith, with the intention of helping the ailing man, into her hero zone. Unfortunately, despite her good intentions, the ascetic turns out to be Rāvana. However, such are the twists in life which keep it interesting. What is even more interesting is that the intention of helping someone takes Sītā on an even bigger adventure, far greater than she could have ever imagined. Flying through the air on Rāvana’s air bound chariot, Sītā is terrified, but they eventually arrive in the new world of

48 Lakshman’s boundary (author’s translation) in the Rāmāyana is defined as the line Lakshmana marks around the forest hut, informing Sītā that so long as she stays within no harm will come to her, right before he goes to help Rām and Sītā (stepping over the boundary) is subsequently abducted.
Lanka, where Sitā, by continuing to behave in a compassionate manner, is able to make new acquaintances, friends and learn about people who are different from her. Over the course of her captivity Sitā shares her cooking skills with the women around her—while she waits for Rām. He eventually arrives, a battle ensues and he wins. And with Sitā’s rescue the drama of their exile also comes to an end. Sitā has had quite an adventure, and now is ready to explore another, more traditional one, she has been lucky to stay away from, until she was ready—that of being a household (in this case palace) manager. The queen returns to her kingdom, along with her king—to rule in dynamic harmony. After many, many years of serving her people, enduring and overcoming many trials, tribulations, obstacles and challenges (because life isn’t always smooth sailing), Sitā decides it is time to retire, and with that she asks mother earth to take her back. Thus, going back how she came, on her terms, yet wiser, more compassionate and more courageous than when she had started.

Why is this Sitā an adventurer? Because she is, and she can be. At her essence she is an “...expression of [the] personally sacred and timeless elements of [a person’s] life. [She] is [also an] expression of how the patter of separation-initiation-return [can] play itself out in [the lives of women]” (Atkinson 1995, xv). She is a medium that allows women to connect their stories, on their own terms, to that of the larger collective; and in doing so, recognise the universality of all life. This Sitā is a radical act, she is an attractive adventure, she is an expression of my moral imagination.
Glossary

Ābhaya: A gift of unanxiousness; liberation from the fear of otherness

Ādivasi: aboriginal, “beginningless.” human communities; a future non-anthropocentric self-image of humanity as a whole, beyond the pride and shame of history.

Advaita: non-duality; classical and continually renewed Indian philosophical and spiritual teaching and testimony of the sole and ultimate reality of self; a saving counter-intuitiveness in an age overwhelmed by the propaganda of dualism, secular as well as religious.

Ahimsa: non-injury or non-violence

Aranyā: forest; literally, “that which cannot be battled,” metaphor of self

Ātmān: self; not ego; I; not I as “this” opposed to “that”

Bodhisattvā: One who aspires to enlightenment, or Buddha-hood, and carries out altruistic practices. It also indicates a state of life characterised by compassion. The bodhisattva ideal is central to the Mahayana Buddhist tradition as the individual who seeks happiness both for her – or himself and for others.

Bodhisattvas of the Earth: An innumerable host of bodhisattvas who emerge from beneath the earth as described in the fifteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra. The Buddha, Shakyamuni, entrusts to them the task of propagation of the essence of the Lotus Sutra in the time after his death. Nichiren regarded those who embrace and propagate the teaching of the Mystic Law as Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

Caste System or Caste: Known in Hindu texts as varnashrama dharma or chaturvarna, the system of four varnas. The approximately four thousand endogamous castes and sub-castes (jatis) in Hindu society, each with its own specified hereditary occupation, are divided into four varnas – Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (soldiers), Vaishyas (traders) and Shudras (servants). Outside of these varnas are the avarna castes, the
Ati-Shudras, sub-humans, arranged in hierarchies of their own – the Untouchables, the Unseeables, the Unapproachables – whose presence, whose touch, whose very shadow is considered to be polluting by privileged-caste Hindus. (Arundati Roy)

Cause and effect: Buddhism expounds the law of cause and effect that operates in life, ranging over past, present and future existences. This causality underlies the doctrine of karma. From this viewpoint, causes formed in the past are manifested as effects in the future. Buddhism emphasizes the causes one creates and accumulates in the present, because these will determine one’s future.

Chakrā Philosophy of Yoga: The Sanskrit word *Chakrā* literally translates to wheel or disk.

In yoga, meditation, and Ayurvedā, this term refers to wheels of energy throughout the body. There are seven main chakrās, which align the spine, starting from the base of the spine through to the crown of the head. To visualize a chakrā in the body, imagine a swirling wheel of energy where matter and consciousness meet. The constant, uninhibited flow of energy, called *prānā* (literally meaning breathe), or vital life force is critical to optimum functioning of these wheels of energy. The seven main chakrās are identified as follows:

The first three chakrās, starting from the base of the spine, are identified as chakrās of matter – the first chakrā, *mulādharā* is located at the base of the spine, the pelvic floor, and the first three vertebrae; the word *mulādharā* can be broken into two parts; *mula* meaning “root” and *ādharā* meaning “support” or “base”; the first chakrā is connected to a human being’s physical body and its material functions, such as digestion (including excretion), birth and procreation, and breathing and dying; the second chakrā, *svādhishthanā* is located above the pubic bone, below the navel, it is identified as a person’s creative or sexual chakra; the word *svādhishthanā* can be translated as “the dwelling place of the self,” here memories are transformed into
emotions; the third chakrā, manipurā means “the lustrous gem”, it covers the area from the navel to the breastbone, it is identified as the source of personal power and governs self-esteem and the power of transformation, it also controls metabolism and digestion. Located at the heart centre, the fourth chakrā, anhatā (meaning “unhurt”) is at the middle of the seven chakrās and unites the lower chakrās of matter with the upper chakrās of spirit. The fourth chakrā is also spiritual, it serves as a gateway or a bridge between our body, mind, memories and spirit. The opening of the heart chakra permits a deeper understanding of love; particularly the spiritual aspect that transcends the mere interpersonal sphere and begins to communicate trans-personally, universally. Love is then no longer connected to people and conditions, but to flows and streams. It encompasses all that is alive, nature, cosmos and life itself. With this awakening, we reach the final three chakrās, identified as spiritual chakrās. The fifth chakrā is called the Vishuddhā (meaning “purification”) Chakrā and is located in the area of the throat. It is the source of a person’s verbal expression and the ability to speak her truth. The Ajnā Chakrā is located in between the eyebrows and the sixth chakra. It is also referred to as the “third eye”. Ajna means “beyond wisdom” it guides a person’s intuition or inner knowledge. Finally, the seventh chakrā, Sahaswarā, is referred to as the “thousand-petal lotus” chakrā and located at the crown of the head. This chakrā is the source of enlightenment and spiritual connection; the connection to our higher selves, to every being on the planet, and ultimately with the divine energy from which everything emerges. (Refer to Appendix 1(a) for a visual representation)

Dependent origination: Also, dependent causation or conditioned co-arising. A Buddhist doctrine expressing the interdependence of all things. It teaches that no beings or phenomena exist on their own; they exist or occur because of their relationship with
other beings and phenomena. Everything in the world comes into existence in response to causes and conditions. That is, nothing can exist independent of other things in isolation.

Elicitive Conflict Transformation (ECT): A term coined by John Paul Lederach, Elicitive Conflict Transformation (ECT) implies that the researcher believes in following the topic, like map, in order to draw out, tease out or catalyse the relational imbalance or dysfunctional imbalance within a system. It recognises conflict as a natural and common experience in all relationships, a necessary force for innovation and creativity. It perceives people as active participants arranging and rearranging situations and interactions. It perceives conflict as an interactive process based on a search for common or shared meaning. It is shaped by people’s perceptions, interpretations, expressions and intentions. It manufactures meaning based on an accumulated repository of knowledge and experiences. It sees culture as a people’s shared knowledge, expression and common response. It requires responding to any situation with sensitivity and awareness (of the self, others and context).

Gestalt Therapy: Gestalt therapy focuses on process (what is actually happening) over content (what is being talked about). The emphasis is on what is being done, thought, and felt at the present moment (the phenomenality of both client and therapist), rather than on what was, might be, could be, or should have been. Gestalt therapy is a method of awareness practice (also called “mindfulness” in other clinical domains), by which perceiving, feeling, and acting are understood to be conducive to interpreting, explaining, and conceptualizing (the hermeneutics of experience). This distinction between direct experience versus indirect or secondary interpretation is developed in the process of therapy. The client learns to become aware of what he or she is doing and that triggers the ability to risk a shift or change.
Holotropic: Term coined by Stanislav Grof meaning ‘oriented towards wholeness’ that he applies to a range of altered experiences that may, for example, be induced by Holotropic Breathwork.

Holotropic Breathwork™: a powerful approach to self-exploration and personal empowerment that relies on our innate inner wisdom and its capacity to move us toward positive transformation and wholeness. The theoretical framework integrates insights from modern consciousness research, anthropology, various depth psychologies, transpersonal psychology, Eastern spiritual practices, and mystical traditions of the world. The name Holotropic means literally “moving toward wholeness” (from the Greek “holos”=whole and “trepein”=moving in the direction of something). (Grof 2010)

Human Revolution: The term used by the Soka Gakkai to describe a fundamental process of inner transformation whereby each individual can unleash the full potential of their lives and take control over their own destiny.

Hunger: Depending on the context it is mentioned in; (1) drive towards self-actualisation; (2) earthly desires; (3) desires of the “lesser-self”; (4) physiological and psychological requirements for the growth of the body and mind; (5) needs, wants, desires seeking nourishment (psychological, spiritual and physiological)

Karma: Potentials in the inner, unconscious realm of life created through one’s actions in the past or present that manifest themselves as various results in the present or future. Buddhism interprets karma in two ways: as indicating three categories of action, i.e., mental, verbal, and physical, and as indicating a dormant force thereby produced. That is, one’s thought, speech and behaviour, imprint themselves as a latent force or potential in one’s life. Shakyamuni maintained that what makes a person noble or humble is not birth but one’s action. Therefore, the Buddhist doctrine
of karma is not fatalistic. Rather karma is viewed not only as a means to explain the present, but also as the potential force through which to influence one’s future.

Middle Way: The way or path that transcends polar extremes. The Middle Way also indicates the true nature of all things, which cannot be defined by the absolutes of existence or nonexistence. It transcends the extremes of polar and opposing views, in other words, all duality.

Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō: (Sanskrit translation: Saddharma-pundarīka-sūtra) The ultimate Law or truth of the universe, according to Nichiren’s teaching. Nichiren first taught the invocation of Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō to a small group of people in his native province of Awa, Japan in 1253. It literally means devotion (namu) to Myohō-rengē-kyō. According to the Orally Transmitted Teachings, the act of devotion (namu) has two aspects: One is to devote oneself to, or fuse one’s life with, the eternal and unchanging truth; the other is that, through this fusion of one’s life with the ultimate truth, one simultaneously draws forth inexhaustible wisdom that functions in accordance with change circumstances. “Myō” stands for the Dharma nature, or enlightenment, while “hō” represents darkness, or ignorance. Together as “myōhō”, they express the idea that ignorance and the Dharma nature are a single entity, or one in essence. “Rengē” stands for the two elements of cause and effect. Cause and effect are also a single entity. “Kyō” represents the words and voices of all living beings. A commentary says, ‘The voice carries out the work of the Buddha, and it is called kyō.’ Kyō is also defined as that which is constant and unchanging in the three existences of past, present and future. Nichiren not only established the invocation (daimoku) of Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō but embodied is as a mandala, making it the object of devotion called the Gohōnzōn.
Nichiren (1222 – 82): A Buddhist reformer who lived in thirteenth-century Japan, often referred to by the honorific title “Daishonin” or “great sage.” His intensive study of the Buddhist sutras convinced him that the Lotus Sutra contained the essence of the Buddha’s enlightenment and that it held the key to transforming people’s suffering and enabling the peaceful flourishing of society. Nichiren established the invocation of Nam-myoho-ренге-kyo in 1253.

Rama: Visnu’s incarnation, immediate predecessor of Krishna; object of supreme devotion; the name “Rama” is a mantra of matchless, integral power, which can in English be read as an acronym for “Reality and Manifestation”

Ramayana: (1) sacred history; epic story, composed as a poem by Valmiki, of Rama’s victory over Ravana; the prevention of the appropriation of divine energy (Sītā) by shadow forces (of self-consciousness by ego) (2) Can also be perceived as a segment of a vast cyclical tale, one piece of a complex jigsaw puzzle. Events in the tale are a consequence of the past and case of the future. It cannot be seen in isolation, at least not in a Hindu context. To do so is to see the stars and miss the sky. Further, the epic is not a single text, or even multiple texts. It is a belief, a tradition, a subjective truth, a thought materialized, ritualized and celebrated through narrations, songs, dances, sculptures, plays, paintings and puppets across hundreds of locations, over hundreds of years. Each retelling has many tributaries and many branches.

Ravana: demon king of Lanka, abductor of Sītā; slain by Rama (ego-king of the body, abductor of self-consciousness, slain by self-realization)

Self: (1) Personal being (2) The ordinary ego or personality (3) In Jung's psychology, the Self is an archetypal image representing the primal ground, totality and integration of the psyche (conscious and unconscious) (4) The soul or individual spirit (5) The real self (6) See also ātmān.
Self-actualization: Term used in humanistic psychology to refer to the full realization of a person’s potential.

Self-realization: Term used in different ways to refer to the realization of a better state of being.

Shadow: Jung’s term for the archetype of darker, sinister, hidden tendencies within the psyche that contrast with the consciously expressed ego or persona.

Sītā: Rama’s wife, esoterically, the Divine Mother, Godhead, Mahalakshmi

Soka Gakkai: Literally, “Society for the Creation of Value,” a Japanese lay Buddhist movement based on the practice of Nichiren Buddhism, founded in 1930 by Tunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda. Originally called Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value-Creating Education Society), it expanded rapidly in post-war Japan to become one of the world’s largest lay Buddhist movements.

Soka Gakkai International: (SGI) Founded by Daisaku Ikeda in 1975, is a worldwide network of lay Buddhists dedicated to a shared vision of a better world through the empowerment of the individual and the promotion of peace, culture and education based upon the teachings of Nichiren. (Ikeda 2014, 398)

Ten Worlds: a classification of ten distinct states of life – laid out in order to develop a clearer understanding of the dynamics of the Buddhist philosophy of the human condition and gain insight on how to improve it. The Ten Worlds are: the world of hell, the world of hungry spirits (also called hunger); the world of animals (animality); the world of anger; the world of human beings (humanity or tranquillity); the world of heavenly beings (rapture); the world of voice-hearers (learning); the world of cause-awakened ones (realization); the world of bodhisattvas; and the world of Buddhas (Buddhahood). Among there, hell, hunger, animality, anger, humanity and heaven are collectively known as the “six lower worlds” or the “six paths”. The worlds
of voice-hearers, cause-awakened ones, bodhisattvas and Buddhas are known as the “four noble worlds”. The idea of the six paths finds its roots in Hinduism that envisions six broad realms within which all living beings transmigrate through the repeated cycle of death and rebirth. Buddhism evolves this view and identifies the four noble worlds beyond the six paths that are achieved through Buddhist practice.

Hell is a state of life in which one feels that living itself is suffering and that whatever one sees or encounters causes more suffering. The world of hungry spirits, or hunger, is characterised by overwhelming desires and the suffering that comes from those desires going unfulfilled. Desires in themselves are neither good or bad; in the world of hunger, we are unable to use desires creatively; becomes beholden to them and suffering as a result. The world of animals, or animality, is characterised by short-term perspective of reality, based on immediate gain or loss. When in the state of animality, one acts based on instinct or impulse; one is in a perpetual state of reaction. The world of anger is characterised by an aggressive and competitive ego. This world suggests an abiding sense of contention or predisposition towards conflict arising from self-centred ambition. While the first three worlds are reactive, the world of anger requires a degree of self-awareness given that is characterised as incongruence arising from outward appearance and behaviour and inner feelings and orientation.

The world of human beings, or humanity, is a condition of composure or tranquillity. One aspect of the world of humanity is the ability to reason that enables a person to discern ‘right’ from ‘wrong’ and exhibit a fair degree of composure. The world of heavenly beings or rapture refers to a condition of life in which one experiences the joy of having one’s desires fulfilled. However, the joy associated with this world is transient and momentary, intrinsically dependent on external variables. The world of voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones (also called worlds of learning and
realization) are together known as the “two vehicles” towards manifesting the state of bodhisattva or Buddhahood in one’s life. Both worlds of the two vehicles are consistent of an awakening to the transience or impermanence of all things. The world of bodhisattvas, is characterised by beings who ceaselessly exert themselves towards manifesting the state of Buddhahood and supporting other living beings in their journey to do the same. This is a mission-oriented state of life, dedicated to the sake of the people. Compassion is fundamental in this world. The world of Buddhahood, is an awakened life; a state of life that is open and embodies unsurpassed compassion and wisdom for oneself and fuelled by this compassion and wisdom, a person in this state works constantly to enable all people to manifest the same world.

Sutras before the Lotus Sutra, adopted a hierarchical view of the Ten Worlds. However, the Lotus Sutra overturns this way thinking, teaching “the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds” – that each of the Ten Worlds possesses the potential of all ten within itself. Rather than distinct realms, the Ten Worlds are conditions of life that everyone has the potential to experience at any time.
Figures

**Figure 1(a): Chakra Philosophy**
Source: Google Images

**Figure 1(b): Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**
Source: Google Images
Figure 1(c): Galtung’s Conflict Triangle(s)

![Galtung's Conflict Triangle](image1)

Figure 1(d): Lederach’s Triangle

![Lederach's Triangle](image2)

Figures 1(e): Tranrational Pyramid (Dietrich's Pyramid)

- **Bird’s-eye-view:**

- **Lateral View of intra-personal layers:**
• **Bird’s-eye view of intra-personal layers:**

![Diagram of intra-personal layers]

• **Diagram of Transrational Peace: inter- and intra-personal layers combined**

![Diagram of Transrational Peace]
Figure 2: Elicitive Conflict Mapping

Bibliography


http://www.daisakuikeda.org/sub/resources/works/lect/lect-08.html


Affidavit

I hereby declare that I have written the presented Master thesis/Masterarbeit by myself and independently and that I have used no other than the referenced sources and materials.

In addition, I declare that I have not previously submitted this Master thesis/Masterarbeit as examination paper in any form, either in Austria or abroad.

Place, Date

Signature