From Critical to Cosmic Consciousness: Feminist-Informed Yoga as a Healing Approach for Marginalized Mothers in a Mid-Sized Canadian City

By

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Abstract

Statement of the Problem: Yoga is a 27-billion-dollar industry in North American which is deeply rooted in capitalism, racism, and colonialism. The removal of spirituality from yoga in the Western world with the ascendency of the modern postural yoga movement in particular in Canada has been and continues to be harmful to yoga's grounding in Jain history, and more generally to South Asian social and cultural development, and in particular to Jain diasporic women born and raised in Canada, such as myself. I argue that marginalized mothers are a group of people that could be re-centered through a practice of yoga as they are broadly impacted negatively because of race, gender, sexuality, class, and/or abilities within a present-day culture.

Theoretical Framework and Research Questions: Decolonization is presented as the theoretical framework used to examine yoga through the lenses of both feminism and culture. The research questions were: (1) What is the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga in contemporary culture? (2) What are some of the ways in which a feminist-informed yoga can be applied as a healing approach to various populations of marginalized mothers in a mid-sized Canadian city?

Methods: I use a research method known as autoethnography that recognizes the reciprocal relationship between theory and story. Data collection includes a lay summary, journaling, yoga and meditation, text spinning, and collaging. Data analysis focuses on making sense of the story, my writing, and included thematizing, daily writing, theorizing the story, considerations of the story and editing.

Findings: For research question one; I developed a theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga as practiced by me in contemporary culture, which included the yoga traditions, cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and commodification as central to its theoretical foundation along with trauma and addictions For research question two, feminist-informed yoga as a healing tool includes centring marginalized mothers experience in their racial-ethnic struggles and recognizes the lack of cultural representations of South Asian women from yoga spaces in Canada. In addition, the yoga traditions, centering feminism, addressing cultural appropriation, the impact of trauma and addictions in healing for marginalized mothers offers healing.

Discussion and conclusions: I provided an argument of the forces that have cut yoga from its roots in Canada. In particular, the removal of Canadian-born Jain mothers and more generally, South Asian mothers who face systemic racism in yoga studios. It is difficult to access this kind of yoga in a meaningful way in Canada given the last 100 years of colonial appropriation and commodification of the practice. Yoga, as practiced in the Jain way of life, offers a holistic approach to well-being and spiritual health, including connection to cosmic consciousness and intuitive knowing that can be traced back to the ancient Harappa Valley Civilization. Reconnection to the yoga traditions through *ahimsa* (nonviolence) along with the bringing together of nature including the souls of animals, plants, and rocks is central. Feminist-informed yoga benefits as practical measures can be implemented in community spaces to assist women in decolonizing their lives and encouraging more profound respect for a Jain way of life and for the South Asian women who follow it in Canada.

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Dedication

To Maya Mehta, my daughter, thank you for your patience as I completed this doctorate.

Also remember:
“Whatever you're meant to do, do it now. The conditions are always impossible.” — Doris Lessing

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1.0 Chapter One: Introduction

In this dissertation, I argue that the modern posture yoga movement as manifested in the Western world has been and continues to be harmful to South Asian social and cultural development, the South Asian diaspora, and in particular to diasporic South Asian women born and raised in Canada. Specifically, I present a theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga for marginalized mothers in contemporary Canadian culture. The World Health Organization (2017) identifies yoga as a public health concern and that it should be possible to access its full potential as a traditional knowledge system. In traditional practice, yoga means the union of the body, mind, and spirit, with a meditative and spiritual core (Bryant, 2015). The meditative and spiritual core of yoga has been practiced for thousands of years. It was passed on through generations as a way of life. Traditional yoga has always been more than just a physical exercise (Bryant, 2015). The Indian-diaspora embodies an intellectual knowledge of the spiritual heritage of yoga traditions that can counteract the effects of modern posture yoga movement as practised in the Western hemisphere. This intellectual knowledge is particularly important as the modern posture yoga movement is deeply entangled with colonization, cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and capitalism. For example, mindfulness is being introduced and practiced in schools, workplaces, and at home as a way to combat stress and to self-regulate (Kuyken, et al., 2013). The problem, though, is that many practioners in these places do not know that there is limited scientific evidence about the effectiveness of mindfulness (Hyland, 2016; Plante, 2019; Safran, 2014).

This study uses a decolonizing approach to envision and construct a theoretical framework of feminist-informed yoga and to suggest how it can be applied as a healing approach to populations of marginalized mothers. A decolonizing approach removes modern posture yogis as the central figures of yoga and re-centers the lived experiences in the spiritual and cultural yoga traditions of South Asian women of the Canadian diaspora in contemporary culture. The broader context of cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and commodification of yoga is explored in this study along with its specific impact on descendants of the South Asian diasporic culture in a theoretical framework of decolonization.

It is difficult to access this form of traditional yoga in a meaningful way in Canada given the more than 100 years of colonial appropriation and commodification of the practice and systemic racism. This means that individual South Asian women experience racism in yoga studios. In this study, I speak from the perspective of a Canadian woman of South Asian descent whose parents were refugees to Canada and grandparents were migrants from India to East Africa, all of whom followed a Jain way of life. I have faced systemic racism within the yoga community as a South Asian woman, in particular every yoga teacher I have ever had lacked awareness about the history of the yoga traditions in contemporary yoga spaces. For instance, on countless occasions, I have tried to explain to yoga teachers that I grew up in a family where the practice of yoga was our normal way of life, and they would simply ignore me or tell me that was not possible. This is because many yoga teachers access certain aspects of yoga and the yoga traditions, such as posture practice, that are suitable and transferable for

themselves. However, they fail to recognize yoga comes from historically oppressed communities of colour and ignore these communities' well-being, in particular, South Asian women within Canadian culture.

In this study I also identify how feminist-informed yoga can be applied as a healing approach to specific populations of marginalized mothers. A mother includes a biological mother (Letherby, 1994; Oxford, 2019) or anyone who identifies as a mother regardless of their current parenting responsibilities (Ben-Ari & Livni, 2006; Brown & Perlesz, 2008). A marginalized mother is a broad term used to identify populations impacted negatively because of race, gender, sexuality, class, and/or abilities within a present-day culture (Bloch & Taylor, 2014; Taylor & Bloch, 2018). For example, structural barriers resulting in lack of affordable housing, or childcare are heightened for marginalized mothers. For several decades, feminist academics and activists have documented the lived experiences of marginalized mothers across North America (Green, 2004; O'Reilly, 2010). However, there remains a need to recognize marginalized mothers' unmet needs to heal from trauma and addictions experienced by living in a patriarchal society (Taylor & Bloch, 2018). Specifically, this thesis demonstrates the shift from a critical consciousness to cosmic consciousness through a theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga. I combine essential concepts from a Jain way of life*,* ***sāmkhya*** philosophy, *Patanjali's* yoga sutras, and the 8-limb path. I use autoethnography as a methodology to draw upon my lived experiences.

In chapter two, to situate the meaning of feminist-informed yoga, I provide a literature review of yoga traditions rooted in ancient historical times. Rooting a feminist-informed yoga in the yoga traditions allows me to draw

from a large pool of knowledge with the specific goal of creating a theoretical framework for feminist-informed yoga and for marginalized mothers in contemporary Canadian culture.

Figure 1: Historical Overview and Timeline of Significant Aspects in the Timeline of the Yoga Traditions

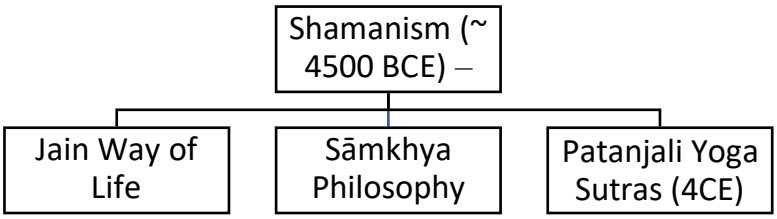


Figure 1 provides a historical overview of the significant aspects of the timeline of the Yoga traditions. Ancient shamanism dates back to roughly 4500 BCE or more (Walsh, 2001) and was practised in different places across the globe, but its precise origins in each region are unknown (Singh, 2018; Winkelman, 2010). Shamanism offers experiences through altered states of consciousness, such as shape shifting to mimic animals and their spirits and facilitate deep connections to nature (Winkleman, 2010). Ancient Indian rishis (also called seers/sages) worshipped nature, in particular, the five elements which were the sun, fire, earth, air, and water (Adhikari, 2009). They altered their states of consciousness through the worship of the five elements (Adhikari, 2009) and communicated with the natural spirits (Sengupta, 2012). They engaged in shapeshifting through drinking an entheogen plant brew called soma (Frawley, 2012; Thoricatha, 2015; Padhy & Dash, 2004). The

ancient yoga traditions followed from about 3300 BCE or earlier and early yoga emerged from its shamanic roots (Crangle, 1994; Feuerstein, 1996).

Yoga originated in India over 5,000 years ago and the yoga traditions are embodied in the spiritual heritage of the Indian-diaspora through practice, such as a Jain way of life which includes *ahimsa* (nonviolence). The transformation into *asana*-obsessed yoga in the West today was not a natural evolution. It was first due to British colonization in India. The British colonizers sought to distance themselves from the local Indians, such as yogis whom they labelled as 'freaks' (Korpela, 2010). In addition, religions such as Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism included particular ways of life, which were culturally appropriated by the British (Korpela, 2010). Finally, the British turned yoga away from religion and into *asana* (posture) alone (Singleton, 2010).

In chapter two, I present a literature review on the subjects of yoga, the yoga traditions, feminism and yoga, guru traditions and consciousness, modern postural yoga, cultural appropriation and spiritual materialism of yoga, the commodification of yoga in capitalist culture, trauma and yoga, addictions and yoga, shamanism and yoga and marginalized mothers. I also introduce decolonization as the theoretical framework used to examine yoga through the lenses of both feminism and culture. The research questions are: (1) What is the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga in contemporary Canadian culture? (2) What are some of the ways in which a feminist-informed yoga can be applied as a healing approach to various populations of marginalized mothers?

In chapter three, I present the rationale for the methodological choice of autoethnography (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015). Autoethnography (auto-*self,* ethno-*culture*), is a qualitative, self-reflective form of writing (Ellis, 2004; Maréchal, 2010) that involves vulnerability (Custer, 2014), and embodies creativity (Munro, 2011; Wiles, Crow, & Pain, 2011; Custer, 2014). Through an autoethnography, I critically explore the subject of yoga and yoga traditions through a decolonizing lens. Specifically, I focus on my upbringing as a Jain woman of colour in a mid-sized Canadian city who was raised in a Jain way of life, in particular by my mother. A Jain way of life provides a discipline of life rooted in vegetarianism, yoga, and ecology that is still followed today by practicing Jains throughout the world. I also practised yoga in a physical-focused space for over twenty years in modern studios.

I draw upon my own lived experiences and explore them through both a feminist and cultural lens to develop a theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga. In the autoethnography, I also reflect on my over twenty years of feminist activism and academic research, along with my work in public health with First Nations and Metis communities in Manitoba. I reflect on feminist-informed yoga's benefits as a healing approach and offer some practical measures that can be used in community spaces to assist mothers.

In chapter four, I provide research findings for my first research question: What is the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga in contemporary Canadian culture? I see the decolonization of yoga for South Asian mothers as the main building block for the decolonization of yoga in contemporary Canadian culture. I connect feminist-informed yoga with several components from the yoga traditions. These include a Jain way of life*, sāmkhya*

philosophy, the yoga sutras of Patanjali, the eight limbs of yoga, the meaning of the guru traditions, and the modern posture yoga movement. I examine cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and commodification; trauma and addictions and feminist-informed yoga; and the link between shamanism and feminist-informed yoga. I centre the need to understand the root causes of addictions amongst populations of marginalized mothers as a social justice issue (Mate, 2008). I also explore trauma and trauma-informed practice as an important issue for marginalized mothers. I also examine how cosmic consciousness brings me a greater self-awareness, rooted in my lived experiences as a second-generation diasporic marginalized mother of South Asian refugee parents. As my family followed a Jain way of life, for example, I see my connection to the cosmic universe as central to any practice of yoga that will bring spiritual and transformative change to me. This observation led me to ask how deepening cosmic consciousness can bring about transformative change in others. South Asian marginalized mothers have the potential to embody tremendous knowledge of spiritual and cultural traditions to any practice of yoga based on traditional ways of knowing.

In chapter four, I also examine representations of South Asian women rooted in the shamanic roots of yoga, the yoga traditions, cosmic consciousness, and the retelling of yoga for meaning in contemporary culture. Furthermore, I bring to light some of the essential feminist and cultural issues facing South Asian woman of the Indian diaspora. Finally, I explore the link between yoga and shamanism as both alter human consciousness for potential health and wellbeing benefits. I argue that there is a profound unexplored healing potential of both yoga and shamanism in the context of

decolonization. Feminist-informed yoga may offer a way to heal from the trauma of oppression. When taught in informed ways, yoga can provide spaces for healing, transformation, and spiritual awakening. Transformation can be something that inspires change or causes a shift in viewpoint.

In chapter five, I explore my second research question, which is: what are some of the ways in which a feminist-informed yoga can be applied as a healing approach to various populations of marginalized mothers? I situate myself as a marginalized single mother with a background in Women's and Gender Studies and critical public health. This has helped me to think about the experiences of marginalized mothers within their racial and ethnic struggles. I identify decolonization of yoga as central to a feminist-informed yoga, but I also place the decolonization of motherhood as central in a healing approach for marginalized mothers in contemporary Canadian culture. I argue that pregnancy, birth, and motherhood are rooted in capitalist and patriarchal systems that seek to limit marginalized mothers' reproductive options. Healing requires a deep union of mind-body-spirit, and theoretical contributions include a Jain way of life, *sāmkhya*, and *Patanjali's* yoga sutras. I examine the healing potential of the guru traditions and consciousness and I critique the modern posture yoga movement in particular, the problem of the inflated *ahamkara* (ego) and being caught up in the ego-identity.

In addition, I further examine how feminists have recently advocated for the need for safer spaces for people of colour to practice yoga (Berila, Klein & Jackson, 2016), in particular in the modern posture yoga movement. I further discuss cultural appropriation and marginalized mothers, such as the context of the use of materials that are considered sacred to specific populations

based on their racial-ethnic practices. I argue that second-generation women of colour mothers, like myself, have been taught that survival means working as hard as possible without complaining or self-care. I draw from the 'ideology of mothering' as proposed by Indigenous mothering scholar, Kim Anderson (2000), which inspired me to develop my thinking about marginalized motherhood and spirituality. A resurgence of Indigenous spiritual knowledge might have parallels for women from the South Asian diaspora. While my focus has been primarily on South Asian women, I believe that this approach may be relevant to other communities.

I draw on the concept of woman spirit, which Anderson (2000) explains, as universal energy or vibrational sound of mother earth, as a reclamation of Indigenous motherhood, in the post-colonial context which offers healing. I have often felt othered due to my spiritual beliefs based on a Jain way of life. I offer a perspective that draws from Indigenous theories on mothering and motherhood with a focus on healing in a decolonizing context. This offers perspectives that draw on my experiences as a South Asian marginalized mother that focus on healing based on the knowledge of the yoga traditions and inspired by the writing of Indigenous theories on mothering that place spirituality at the centre of decolonial healing.

Feminist-informed yoga may offer a way to heal from the trauma of oppression when taught in informed ways; yoga can provide spaces for healing and spiritual awakening. By practicing yoga and meditation, healing is affirmed from mind-body-spirit connections. I connect mind-body-spirit to the life energy and force that links to cosmic consciousness. Self-realization is the affirmation of healing with the will power that is created. This thesis concludes

with the idea that every word I speak should be a soul vibration of the cosmic universe.

2.0 Chapter Two: Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I review the literature on yoga and yoga traditions, guru traditions and guru consciousness, modern posture yoga, feminism and yoga, cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism and the commodification of yoga in capitalist culture, trauma and yoga, addictions and yoga, yoga and shamanism, and marginalized mothers. Then I present the theoretical framework, research positionality, and research questions.

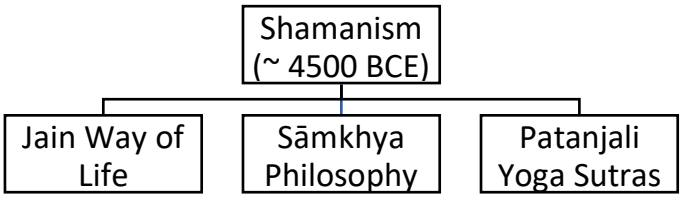
2.1 Yoga and the Yoga Traditions

Yoga can be defined in Sanskrit to mean 'union' (Butera, 2006) and is derived from the verbal root *yuj-*, which means, "to harness, prepare, equip, or fasten" (Feuerstein, 2007, p. 1). Yoga is a mind, body, and spiritual discipline (Feuerstein, 2007) which originated in India with a history of several thousand years (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Within Anglophone North America, it has been predominantly modified into a physical posture practice (De Michalis, 2005) with significant health benefits (World Health Organization, 2015). However, its spiritual health benefits have been undervalued and understudied, which is problematic (Gandhi & Wolff, 2017) because the deeper meaning of yoga is often missed (Berila, Klein, & Jackson, 2016).

There are several significant moments in the early history of yoga that established the need for a deeper understanding of yoga. The yoga traditions developed during a historical period between 3300 BCE -1300 BCE (Crangle, 1994). This was when ancient Indian *rishis* (also called seers/sages) worshipped nature, in particular, the six elements which were the sun, moon, fire, earth, air, and water (Adhikari, 2009). For example, *rishis* engaged in

rituals that communicated with nature, including the use of soma, a sacred plant, to alter states of consciousness (Frawley, 2012; Padhy & Dash, 2004; Thoricatha, 2015). To situate the meaning of feminist-informed yoga, I offer a background to the yoga traditions. Figure 2 provides a historical overview of numerous significant aspects in the timeline of the yoga traditions, which has shamanic roots.

Figure 2: Historical Overview and Timeline of Significant Aspects in the Timeline of the Yoga Traditions



Shamanism offers experiences through altered states of consciousness, facilitated through shapeshifting to mimic animals and their spirits and can facilitate a deep connection to nature (Winkleman, 2010,). Ancient shamanism dates back to roughly 4500 BCE or more in parts of Asia (Walsh, 2001). It was practised in different places across the globe, but its origins are unknown (Singh, 2018; Winkleman, 2010).

The yoga traditions offer a rich foundation to the shamanic roots of yoga. No one knows precisely when the yoga traditions began (Feuerstein, 1996) as the ancient Indian subcontinent was home to thousands of local animistic groups that lived a shamanic way of life (Feuerstein, 1996). These ancient Indian traditions produced an early understanding of the mental structure of consciousness that established the yoga traditions (Feuerstein,

1996). There is evidence that Jainism began in the eighth century BCE, but its origins remain obscure (Rankin, 2013). A Jain way of life provides a discipline of life rooted in vegetarianism, yoga, and ecology that is still followed today by practicing Jains throughout the world. The yoga traditions also include the *sāmkhya* philosophy*, Patanjali's* yoga sutras, and the eight limbs of yoga.

Yoga is explored for its meaning as a spiritual tradition outside of the rigid context of religious traditions in which belief systems and rituals are systematically arranged and formally established. The World Health Organization (2017) identifies yoga as a public health initiative and that there should be access to its full potential as a traditional knowledge system beyond the hyper-focus of it as solely a physical activity. In the yoga traditions, yoga means the union of the body, mind, and spirit, and at the centre, it has a meditative and spiritual core (Bryant, 2015). This core of yoga has been practiced for thousands of years. It was passed on through generations as a way of life. Traditional yoga has always been more than just a physical exercise (Bryant, 2015). The yoga traditions are embodied by the spiritual heritage of the Indian-diaspora, which brings an intellectual knowledge of the yoga traditions that can counteract the effects of yoga as practised in the Western hemisphere. Archaeological evidence such as the Pashupati seal (1700 BCE) dates back to the Harappa Indus Valley Civilization and indicates a long history of the yoga traditions [See Figure 3: Pashupati Seal from the Harappa Valley Civilization] (Doniger, 2011; Werness, 2006). The Pashupati seal, is (an image of a yogi in posture that has been discovered at the UNESCO world heritage site of Mohenjo-Daro pre-dated Vedic India called the Harappa Valley 1700 BCE) from the Indus Valley civilization. The seal

depicts a *rishi* with a three-horned animal in *padmasana* (sitting) yoga pose (Sovatsky, 2009). The citizens of the ancient Harappa civilization were known for following the principles of *ahimsa* (Chapple, 1993). Chapple (2015) explains,

> Archaeological evidence of cities dated back to as early as 3000 BCE points to the presence of civilization in the Indus Valley, characterized by orderly cities and extensive use of terracotta seals. The seals of the Indus valley (e.g., Harappa), depict seams of meditating proto-yogi, meditating figures surrounded by animals. Also, current yoga practice stems from the Indus valley shamanic rituals as indicated on these seals (p. 200).

Yoga poses are deeply related to the animal relations of yoga (Chapple, 2008). Chapple (2013) explains the first evidence of early practices of *ahimsa* (nonviolence),

> Both the meditative poses and the apparent veneration for animals have been cited as evidence of proto-yoga traditions in India, akin to Jainism. The seal [see Figure 3] from Harappa wherein various animals surround a person engaged in what is described as mulabandhasana, a sitting yogic pose wherein one's heels are pressed against the premium with knees pressed firmly to the ground (p.200).

In Harappa, the image of the mother goddess was also predominant (see Figure 4) and has been speculated to be revered within an ancient matriarchal culture (Gottener-Abendroth, 2008). These images of terracotta statues indicate a more profound connection to *prakrti*, from the ***sāmkhya*** philosophy. This suggests the concepts of ***sāmkhya*** and yoga may have been organized in the matriarchal society of Harappa (Pyburn, 2004).

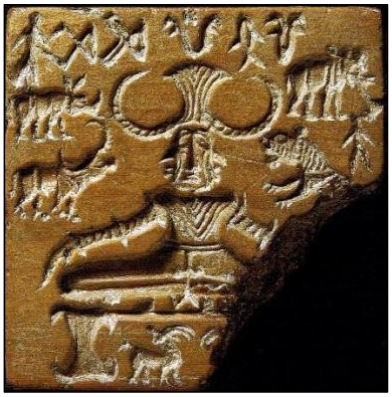


Figure 3: Pashupati Seal from the Harappa Valley Civilization (Source: National Museum New Delhi, 2019)

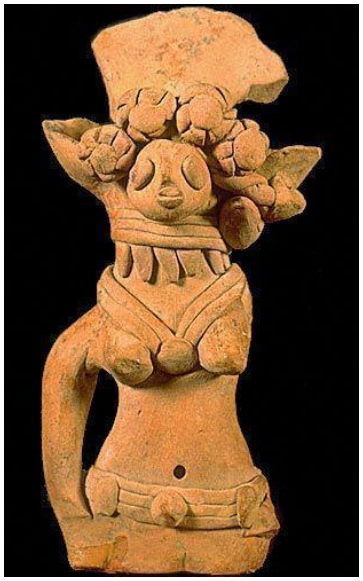


Figure 4: Mother goddess from Harappa Valley Civilization (Source: Pakistan, 2019).

There is a link between early non-Vedic Indic cultural history and a Jain way of life (Feuerstein, 2003). For example, the *sramana* (seeker) teachings (sixth BCE) from which Jainism arose in ancient India focused on ascetic lifestyle and principles (Samuel, 2008). The *sramana* traditions developed well before Hinduism emerged and led to modern yoga practices (Samuel, 2008). The roots of the yoga traditions persist in the daily life of Jains living in the Indian diaspora (Chapple, 2018). A Jain way of life includes a mind, body, and

spiritual dedication to the practices of vegetarianism, yoga, meditation, environmentalism, and non-violence (Jain, 2007). Jainism emerged as a system of yogic thinking based on an oral tradition (Dundas, 2012) that eventually developed into a full religion (Lochtefeld, 2002). Chapple (2008 explains that,

> Jainism arose prior to Buddhism taking form in Northeastern India perhaps as early as 800BCE. Around 500 years later Jainism spread South, where Digambara (white clouds) tradition of naked male ascetics took root in the West, developing into the Svetambara traditions. Today both forms of Jainism can be found throughout the subcontinent and starting a century or more ago, lay Jains began to migrate to East Africa, the British Isles and most recently to North America (p. 1).

Today, evidence from archaeological remains includes many Jain statues honouring yogic-like humans in postures depicting nature, including *padmasana* (lotus), *ardha-padmasana* (half-lotus*)*, *vajrasana* (thunderbolt), and *sukhasana (*pleasant sitting) (Chapple, 2015).

A Jain way of life is a disciplined way of life that can shed light on the deeper meaning of the yoga traditions. Yogic thought is the foundation of a Jain way of life*,* in which lay Jains throughout the Indian diaspora have as their central practices its moral ethics (*yamas*) (Jain, 2007). In contrast, mainstream yoga practitioners in the Western Hemisphere who want to delve deeper into their spirituality desire the *yamas*, as the foundation of their yogic identity and communities (Feuerstein, 2011).

The *acaranga sutra* describes the codes of conduct for an ascetic life and is the oldest Jain textbook, and also predates *Patanjali's* yoga *sutras* (Jain, 1998). The roots of Jain practices and way of life were beginning under Harappan civilization. For example, historical evidence from Mohenjo-Daro Harappa civilization identifies principals from the Jain way of life as a

peaceful, nonviolent civilization (Cork, 2005). In contemporary culture, Jainism is understood as a complex knowledge system with sophisticated rituals involving meditation, cosmology, liberation, karma, and the soul. Meditation plays a central role in both lay and ascetic practice (Jain, 2013). An example is *samayika (*concentration*),* a daily isolated meditation*,* which involves sitting in yogic postures for forty-eight minutes a day to focus only on your soul (Jain, 2013). Postures in *samayika* include *padma-asana* (sitting pose), *khadga-*asana (standing pose), *ardha-padmasana-asana* (sitting pose with different leg positions) (Jain, 2013).

According to Jain cosmology, “the universe (*loka*) and its constituents (living beings, matter, space, and time) are an uncreated entity, existing since infinity, having neither a beginning nor an end” (Caillat, 2013, p. 105). In Jainism, the cosmos takes the shape of the human body, such as “the lower realm of the body is a place of will and health that allows for the purification of the body and dispels *karma*, and the upper realms of the body provide the clarity of experiences” (Shah, 1998, p. 74). In the Jain way of life, purified senses and a calm mind can erase a lifetime of stress and *karma* (Chapple, 2018). Jain teachings are distinguishable in Jain architecture through enormous humans resembling structures that bring body, mind, and sense into a space of contemplation and devotion for the observer (Chapple, 2018). In Jainism, *moksha* means liberation or salvation (Mishra, 2013), which is a blissful state of existence free from karmic bondage, and *samsara* means transmigration in the cycle of birth and death (Harada, 2006). *Jiva*, or soul, means conscious living breathing and includes both animated (e.g., humans) and inanimate objects (e.g., rocks and soil) as philosophical beliefs (Chapple,

2008). Yoga traditions include a Jain type of yoga (Chapple, 2018). Chapple (2008) writes,

> The early years of Jainism explain the process through which impulses of *karma* adhered to and hence occluded the luminosity of the soul. Also, there exists no systematic discussion of the historical development of meditation and yoga in Jainism in any Western language (p. 1-2).

A Jain yoga includes the concept of multiple *jivas* (souls), and it is rooted in the concept of perspectivism or the idea of valuing multiple perspectives on a subject as part of its ethical teachings. The practice of Jain ascetics involves the removal from, but not dissociation with, the world (Chapple, 2018). Finally, the idea of Jain yoga includes meditation, which is central to a way of life. Chapple (2008) explains,

> The term yoga for Jainism covers multiple levels of meaning. In early Jaina traditions, the term yoga described the process by which *karmas* bind themselves to the soul (*jiva*). Later, yoga in Jainism came to refer to spiritual practice. This sense of the word remains in general usage today (p.2).

I note a deeper understanding of yoga and the yoga traditions in the study of the *sāmkhya* philosophy. Scholars acknowledge the system that situates yoga is called the *sāmkhya* philosophy. This philosophy is rooted in Hindu Vedic yoga traditions of India and is the most popularized knowledge system connected to the yoga traditions (Feuerstein, 2011). The *sāmkhya* philosophy asserts that, doing yoga brings awareness of the light of *purusha* (Yogananda, 1973*). Sāmkhya* philosophy regards the universe as consisting of two realities: *purusha* (pure consciousness) and *prakrti* (nature). In the *sāmkhya* philosophy, the three *gunas* (virtues) comprise *prakrti* (nature) which is said to provide the arena of *purusha* (pure consciousness) (Lochtefeld, 2001). According to *sāmkhya,* the *gunas* have always been, and continue to be, present in all things and beings in the world

(Lochtefeld, 2001). The *gunas* have a built-in continuum to reach *purusha* and to refine awareness through *sattva* (Larson, 2001; Lochtefeld, 2002). The three *gunas* depend on each other to function as the whole of *prakrti* (Feuerstein, 1996). *Sattva* focuses on the virtue of human intelligence, light, and brightness and *rajas.* The *rajas guna* is the principle of action, such as how people apply their energy and how that energy applies to the web of life (Larson, 2001; Lochtefeld, 2002). *Tamas,* the third *guna*, is the principle of inertia and stability of form (Larson, 2001; Lochtefeld, 2002). *Purusha* needs a form for manifestation and *prakrti* allows for that experience (Malinar, 2007; Klostermair, 2007). Underlying an understanding of the *sāmkhya* philosophy is that moving towards *purusha* allows for higher states of spirituality (Malinar, 2007; Klostermair, 2007).

The Yoga *Sutras* (Sphorisms) of *Patanjali* (n.d.) contains 196 sutras on the theory and practice of yoga compiled before 400CE (Feuerstein, 1996; Wujastyk, 2011). The *sutra* is a guide for people who seek truth and self-realization (Feuerstein, 2011). *Patanjali* noted that yoga practice must be steady and successful over a long period to culminate (Feuerstein, 2011). The *sutras* (aphorisms) are essential to broadening yoga beyond the physical exercise. *Patanjali's* second yoga sutra 1.2, describes c*itta* (consciousness) *vritti* (fluctuations) *nirodha* (quieting of) the mind and is a central definition of yoga (Feuerstein, 2011). The *sutras* (aphorisms) offer a guide to living a more meaningful yogic life.

Within contemporary Canadian culture, the phrase, the 'eight limbs of yoga' is taught and practised in some yoga spaces and often in yoga teacher training. The eight limbs are *yamas* (ethics), *niyamas* (discipline), *asana*

(posture), *dharana* (concentration), *pranayama* (breath control), *pratyahara* (sense withdrawal), *dharana* (concentration) and *samadhi* (ecstasy). *Yamas* (ethics) consist of *ahimsa* (nonviolence), *satya* (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), *bramacharya* (right use of sexual energy), and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness) (Taneja, 2014). Patanjali's yoga eight limb path consists of a set of 'prescriptions' for a disciplined and purposeful life, of which yoga postures, asana, form only one limb. The *niyamas* (discipline) consist of *shauca* (consisting of purity), *samtosha* (contentment), *tapas* (asceticism*)*, *svadhyaya* (study*)*, and *Ishvara-pranidhana* (devotion to the lord) (Woodyard, 2011). Finally, the last three limbs are *asana* (posture); *pranayama* (breath control); *pratyahara* (sense withdrawal); *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation*)*, and *samadhi* (ecstasy) (Feuerstein, 2007). These eight limbs of yoga are procedures on how to live a meaningful life and serve as a prescription for moral and ethical conduct and self-discipline; they direct attention towards health, and they help people to acknowledge the spiritual aspects of their nature (Feuerstein, 2003).

2.2 The Guru Traditions & Guru Consciousness

Since the earliest times, the yoga traditions have stressed the necessity for guidance (Feuerstein, 2011). *Guru* is a Sanskrit word that means 'heavy with authority', and in the yoga traditions *gurus* are known as dispellers of ignorance (Feuerstein, 2007; Singleton & Goldberg, 2013). Feuerstein (2011) explains that the "guru is a teacher who is capable of removing the student's spiritual darkness or blindness" (p. 30). The *guru* traditions originated in India but have been brought to other parts of the world; not with the purpose to create disciples but to awaken human intelligence (Feuerstein,

2007). Historically, the *guru* was seen as the zenith of authority and given wide acclaim in India and later in Western countries, in particular, Canada and the United States (Feuerstein, 2007). *Gurus* were vital because they were able to take traditional knowledge and communicate it to 'the people' and were often revered for their profound depths of the self (Feuerstein, 2007). Georg Feuerstein (2011) argues that society needs to move away from *guru* traditions into something less rigid, called a *guru* consciousness. This means the yoga student moves from being a seeker to a being filled with knowledge, kindness and maturity of consciousness (Feuerstein, 2011). Engagement with disciplineship sets the context for growth and development but also helps students avoid spiritual materialism (Feuerstein, 2011). Feuerstein (2011) defines discipleship as "endowed with great energy and enthusiasm, intelligent, heroic, having the inclination to practice, free from delusion, unconcerned...eating moderately with senses under control, fearless, pure, skilful, giving, and a shelter for all people" (p. 33). The yoga traditions, as offered from a teacher or life itself, provide the primary structure to surrender into a new way of life, such as into the journey of self-realization and self-awareness (Feuerstein, 2011). In contemporary yoga culture, teachers have manifested *guru* consciousness in many ways (Feuerstein, 2007; Singleton & Goldberg, (2013). Singleton & Goldberg (2013) write that:

> The changing function and status of the guru are intimately and dialogically linked to changes in the understanding and practice of yoga itself in the modern globalized world. Similarly, a semantic shift has occurred in the usage of the term in the English language. The problem of what constitutes a guru and in particular a yoga guru is a pressing one. The globalization of yoga has expanded the guru sphere of influences beyond boundaries of his or her immediate cultural community into a milieu where religious affiliations functions, status and the role of the guru may not be well understood (p. 6-7).

2.3 Modern Posture Yoga Movement

The modern posture yoga movement consists of *asana* (postures) (DeMichaels, 2008). The history of the modern posture yoga movement is deeply entwined with colonialism as from “the 1850s onwards, there developed in India a culture of physical exercise to counter the colonial stereotype of supposed ‘degeneracy’ of Indians compared to the British” (Singleton, 2010, p. 24). In 1893, at the world parliament of religions in Chicago, USA, Vivekananda, a Hindu monk, introduced yoga and the yoga traditions to the Western world. Vivekananda was a missionary who was motivated to share yogic knowledge in order to build a yoga commons with people from his poor community back home in India. However, over time, Vivekananda came to reject the way modern posture yoga was manifested in the Western world (Syman, 2010). Vivekananda argued that the focus of Hatha (a type of modern yoga) yoga on ‘entirely’ physical practices such as *asana*, made it difficult and ineffective for spiritual growth (Syman, 2010). Vivekananda also rejected Hatha yoga because he said it grew out of a widely-shared distaste for India's wandering yogis (Syman, 2010). The modern posture yoga movement in the West was reimaged and rebranded, and it rethought something called the ‘yoga body’ (DeMichaels, 2008).

Elizabeth DeMichaels (2008) explained the distinction between the modern posture yoga movement and how it was ‘worlds’ apart from all forms of classical yoga originating in India. The modern posture yoga movement emerged in North America in the 1920s as a construct of an Indigenized or a spiritualized version of yoga (DeMichaels, 2008). This later became part of the

British education system (DeMichaels, 2008). It was believed that "yoga-inspired routines of physical exercise would train the body to develop self-control and morality" (DeMichaels, 2008, p. 248). For DeMichaels (2008), the modern posture yoga found a place in the secular West. She argued that modern posture yoga is able to adapt itself to a myriad of situations, across the boundaries of various religious traditions, thus, "even if practitioners' commitments and beliefs are differently structured, it is likely that modern posture yoga will be able to offer some solace, physical, psychological or spiritual, in a world where solace and reassurance are sometimes elusive" (Gandhi, 2009, p. 24). Religious studies scholar Andrea Jain (2015) explained that the modern posture yoga movement occurred in the context of a body-obsessed Western culture. Meanwhile, Mark Singleton (2010), a modern yoga scholar, explains "that posture yoga within the transnational modern yoga movement has no relationship to the practice within the Indian traditions" (p. 25). Singleton (2010) goes on to say that "the 'new' posture yoga has no relationship with India, but it was one of radical innovation that resulted in the revision of discourses to the body that resulted from India's encounter with modernity" (p.25). Modernity had the following colonial impact upon India. Colonial modernity is defined as

> …something that was formed after the "Western impact." Therefore, it has a strong tendency to conceive of the modern and the premodern as a rupture. Thus, it is unable to understand the premodern experience in connection with the historical processes that unfolded after the modern period. Furthermore, colonial modernity theory underscores the image of modernity or the nation-state as a powerful predator that subsumes and claims everything premodern into its territory. Even in its criticism of modernity, then, it falls into a kind of modern-centrism that, although unintentional, privileges modernity's power over the premodern (Ryūta, 2015)

Also, *gurus* such as Krishnamacharya, who is often referred to as the father of modern yoga, along with Jois and Iyengar, were all South Asian men of colour, who made yoga famous as an exercise in the Western world. They have come to be known as the cultural representation of yoga in the West in the context of colonial modernity.

Today, yoga is a worldwide commodity, and, as Jain (2015) asserts, is becoming part of the pop culture of the world. Alter (2004) writes that yoga illustrates "transnational transmutation and the blurring of consumerism, holistic health, and embodied mysticism—as well as good old-fashioned Orientalism" (p. 74). Today there are hundreds of varieties of modern yoga that are sold to practitioners with promises of increased health and wellness. There is a growing academic interest in yoga for medical and therapeutic benefits (Woodyard, 2011), as well as around issues of social justice and feminism (Berila, Klein, & Jackson, 2016).

2.4 Feminism and Yoga

Sara Ahmed (2017) writes, "feminism is a sensible reaction to the injustices of the world" (p. 10). Feminism is a movement rooted in the idea that women (and all people) should be free and not limited by political, economic, and social conditions, especially related to race, sex, gender, gender roles, and sexual orientation (Bograd, 1999). Feminist theory is an extension of feminism into theoretical and philosophical perspectives. Judith Butler (2001) writes,

> We may give our own ideas of the world, as it would be, or should be, transformed by feminism. We may have very different ideas of what social transformation is or what qualifies as a transformative exercise. But we must also have an idea of how they relate to the process of

> transformation, whether the theory is itself a transformative task or whether as one of its effects (p.1)

Feminist scholar, bell hooks (1991) write that “Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfils this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing towards this end (p. 1). Whereas feminist writer Audre Lorde (1993) importantly wrote that:

> For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. Racism and homophobia are real conditions of all our lives in this place and time. I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives here. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices (p. 98).

Further, feminist scholar, Peggy McIntosh (2001) explains

> To redesign social systems, we need first to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions. The silences and denials surrounding privilege are the key political tool here. They keep thinking about equality or equity incomplete, protecting unearned advantage and conferred dominance by making these taboo subjects. Most talk by whites about equal opportunity seems to me now to be about equal opportunity to try to get into a position of dominance while denying that systems of dominance exist (p.18).

Feminist theory about the physical body as a site of construction and deconstruction centres around sexed differences and patriarchal power. Also, much of feminist theory is focused on the analysis of gender inequality. Judith Butler (2001) questions the mind-body dichotomy that underpins women’s exclusion. Butler (2001) also offers feminist critiques of conventional spaces and modes of knowledge production that devalue bodily-material conditions and ensure marginalization in relation to power and knowledge.

Hobbs and Rice (2016) situate feminist theory in Canada into four main themes of focus: intersectional theory, gender and queer theory, Indigenous feminist theory, and transnational feminist theory. Intersectional feminism is

concerned with the process that advantages or disadvantages groups based on factors such as sex, gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, age, language, and immigration status (Crenshaw, 1991; Crenshaw, 1995). Intersectional feminism situates women's inequality as varied and explains how these variables interact. For example, Crenshaw (1991) used the concept of intersectionality to explain how black women were excluded from being hired at the Ford Motor company because of both race and gender. Intersectionality highlights social systems as they intersect with one another and relate to inequality, such as racism and heterosexism. In addition, Intersectional feminist theory highlights the ways that inequality is multiple and primarily linked with power and privileges in one's life and systemic oppression (Crenshaw, 1991; Crenshaw, 1995).

Transnational feminism has been a subject of feminist study, theorizing, and discourse for decades. Alexander and Mohanty (2013) explain that "anticolonial feminist democracy involves thinking transnationally, and, in a world increasingly refigured by global economic and political processes, transnational democracy is as necessary as national democracy" (p. xiii). Feminist cultural studies centre feminist theory and can be defined broadly as the critical analysis of gender situated within culture, be it in the anthropological sense of the concept or in the sense of culture as manifested in texts, historical or contemporary, or other cultural products (Ambjörnsson & Ganetz, 2013). Feminist cultural studies focus on the production of meaning, both in the practices of everyday life and in texts of different kinds (Ambjörnsson & Ganetz, 2013).

Berila, Klein, and Jackson (2015) provide an intersectional theoretical framework on yoga that brings together interdisciplinary voices to link feminist theories and critical perspectives on yoga, especially those people who have been impacted by trauma. An intersectional feminist framework on yoga is linked to trauma (Catlett & Bunn, 2016). In particular, yoga offers a way to heal from trauma (Catlett & Bunn, 2016). The importance of healing from trauma is significant, in particular, within the lived experiences of mothers in marginalized populations (Bloch & Taylor, 2014). Racism, homophobia, and classism are prevalent in mainstream yoga studios in contemporary culture (Ballard & Kripalani, 2016; Berila, Klein, & Jackson, 2016; Page, 2016; Gandhi & Wolff, 2017; Haddix, 2016; Jackson, 2016; Kaushik-Brown, 2016; Park, 2014). The experiences of racism, homophobia, and classism in yoga spaces and places often exacerbate or trigger the trauma of marginalized populations. The exclusion of culturally relevant images of yogis makes it challenging to move beyond the capitalist drivers of the yoga industry (Jackson, 2016). Roopa Kaushik-Brown (2016) explains that cultural appropriation of yoga by white people has led to the erasure of South Asian people in American yoga culture. Exploring the impact of racial exclusion within the yoga community provides a deeper understanding of the broader impact of racism on South Asians in North America. Finally, feminists have long advocated for safer spaces to practice yoga (Berila, Klein, & Jackson, 2016; Kaushik-Brown, 2016). Heteronormative privilege remains prevalent in many places within the contemporary culture (Park, 2014) and safe spaces for queer and transgendered people are lacking.

There is often classism in yoga. Yoga is a $27-billion-dollar industry in North America (Berila, Klein & Jackson, 2016, as cited by Gregorie). The cost of attending mainstream yoga classes is prohibitive to many low to middle-income populations (Enoch, 2016), an exclusion rooted in prejudice and discrimination based on social class (Kadi, 1996). Gandhi and Wolff (2017) point out that class and race impact Indian women, who may be recent immigrants to North America, in a unique way. This is because the high costs make it prohibitive for immigrants such as Indian woman. However, Indian women are those to whom the practice of yoga rightfully belongs (Gandhi & Wolff, 2017). There is little research that explores implementing yoga traditions in low to middle-income populations and the ways women are excluded.

During the *sramana* movement of the early 6th century CE, mindfulness was a type of meditation derived from many oral traditions (Everly, 2002). The link between yoga, mindfulness, and feminism is its potential in the embodiment of learning in order to create inclusivity. Today, mindfulness is being introduced and practiced in primary and secondary schools, retreats, workplaces, and at home as a way to combat stress and self-regulate (Kuyken, et al., 2013). The problem is that there are still many researchers who do not know about mindfulness – and ultimately, the field needs a much more systematic and rigorous approach to be able to support such claims (Hyland, 2016; Plante, 2019; Safran, 2014).

2.5 Cultural Appropriation and Spiritual Materialism of Yoga

Cultural appropriation is defined as “the cultural exploitation of elements of a secondary culture by a dominant culture without reciprocity or

shared benefits" (Rogers, 2006, p. 474). It "is derived from the Latin *appropriate*, meaning 'to make one's own'" (Rogers, 2006. p. 474). The use of the cultural appropriation means unfair taking of elements or items that in legal context can be theft (Rogers, 2006). Gandhi and Wolff (2017) argue that the origins of modern posture yoga date back to the place and space of India's colonization by the British, as a result of the colonization of India by Britain, yoga became a practice which allowed Westerners to engage in the ideas of another culture while focusing on the self (Gandhi & Wolff, 2017). As Gandhi and Wolff (2017) state, an Orientalist construction emerged in the 18th century because early Indian yoga missionaries from the East were viewed by the West as spiritual but inferior while those from the West viewed themselves as progressive and superior. Today, the neocolonial effects of cultural appropriation in yoga are harmful as they include a lack of awareness of Indian practices and a hyper-focus on the body as central to yoga. Western or non-Indian yogis continue to profit from the practice of Indian traditions and ignore the political context in which cultural traditions exist within neocolonial society. Furthermore, in contemporary culture, calling out modern posture yoga and its various manifestations as a form of cultural exploitation remains controversial, especially within the context of discussions about exclusion and inclusion in public spaces within society (Singh, 2018). For some people, it remains challenging to separate their yoga practice from the cultural exploitation of yoga.

Cultural appropriation impacts South Asian people, in particular women, in specific ways beyond yoga. South Asians comprise the largest visible minority population in Canada (Collins, 2004; Statistics Canada, 2011), and

many are new immigrants or refugees. This makes South Asians vulnerable to racism (Vissandjee, Desmeules, Cao, Abdool, & Kazanjian, 2004). The term “South Asian(s) refer to those who trace their ancestry to places including India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa and the Caribbean” (Aujla, 2000, p. 41). The terms “‘East Indian’ and ‘Indo-Canadian’ are problematic because of their narrow reference” (Aujla, 2000, p. 41). In addition, “the legacy of colonial discourse is evident in contemporary racialized and sexualized constructions of South Asian women” (Aujla, 2000, p.41). For example, cultural appropriation of mehndi, bindis, and sarees in contemporary culture remains rampant where Indian women are still othered as exotic ‘Easterners’ (Bains, 1998). These acts of cultural appropriation in the Western world indicate favourable acceptance of a colonized culture by the colonizing culture, especially in the context of neocolonialism (Rogers, 2006). These forms of cultural appropriation occur in a culture where South Asian women live with experiences of overt and subtle racism regularly (Aujla, 2000). This is important because racism creates structural barriers for South Asian women, which can lead to their marginalization.

A critique of yoga spirituality in the contemporary yoga movement is that it is cultural appropriation. On the surface, a *cultural appropriation* may seem harmless as it means the taking of elements of one culture by members of a different culture (Young, 2010). However, cultural misappropriation can violate the collective intellectual property rights of the originating culture (Coombe, 1998). Cultural appropriation of yoga spirituality in the West can be “best described as those who have become the ‘face’ of yoga in mainstream

media—[who] are white people" (Berila, 2016, p.13). To put it another way, the erasure of South Asian people from yoga in mainstream media ignores the origin of the yoga traditions, devalues these traditions as complex knowledge systems, and allows white people to take ownership of all elements of yoga as their own culture (Gandhi & Wolff, 2017). This type of erasure is perpetuated by non-Indian yoga teachers who focus solely on physical posture practice and allows for the elimination of the yoga traditions from yoga spaces and places, with the effect of perpetuating white supremacy and ignoring the harmful impacts on diasporic South Asians in North America (Gandhi & Wolff, 2017). South Asian teachers such as Bikram, Iyengar, and Jois also adopted modern yoga styles but were often led by desires to make profits or achieve stardom in the Western cultures, not to preserve the South Asian yoga traditions.

Cultural appropriation occurs when there is an unquestioned sense of entitlement towards yogic rituals of people of colour, in particular, diasporic South Asian women of colour in Canada. A significant concern is less about 'ownership' of yoga, but engagement in a more balanced practice of yoga that incorporates mind, body, and spirit and that has the potential to reach, impact, and benefit the most marginalized and oppressed populations in Canada. Importantly, the United Nations (2015) recently adopted resolution 69/131 as an '*International Day of Yoga,'* paying tribute to the ancient Indian cultures.

2.6 The Commodification of Yoga in Capitalist Culture

Commodification is a vital component of the hegemonic strategy of incorporation (Rogers, 2006). Commodification has been redefined by the dominant culture to remove the genuine meaning of a tradition or idea

(Rogers, 2006). The commodification of yoga through spiritual materialism provides another insight into the phenomenon of cultural appropriation. As explained by Rogers (2006), “commodification involves the transformation of an idea into something to be owned, bought, or sold, limiting its implications to issues of sacrilege (e.g., the commodification of religion) and appropriate compensation” (p. 474). In another example, The World Health Organization (2020) defines self-care as “The ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health-care provider” (p. 1). Gould (2006) explains, “that the ‘consumption’ of spiritual meanings and practices with a materialism propensity such as within the self-care paradigm is harmful” (p. 63). Self-care is the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health and well-being. For feminists, radical self-care involves preserving yourself in the world that is hostile towards your identity (Pyles, 2018). Today the self-care industry, much like the modern yoga industry, is harmful because “the self-care industry is driven by capitalism which brands its products as the path towards spirituality” (Gould, 2006, p. 63).

Spiritual materialism within mainstream yoga sheds light on the simultaneous impact of commodification and cultural appropriation. For example, statues of Indian gods and goddess decorate yoga studios like fashion (Berila, Klein, & Jackson, 2016). Other examples are bindis, a dot worn on the forehead of Hindu and Jain women representing a sacred symbol of the cosmos in its unmanifest state (Antony, 2010), being sold as a costume in contemporary culture. However, when bindis are worn in public they are

often targeted in the context of microaggressions towards South Asian women (Houshmand, Spanierman, & Tafarodi, 2014). The repetition of sacred mantras in a 'fake' Indian accent during a yoga class is a form of racism. Mala beads used in mantras during a meditation by Indian women are often worn as flashy jewellery during yoga classes (Berila, Klein, & Jackson, 2016). The *Om* symbol represents the sacred sound or vibration of the universe and is often used as decoration painted on the walls along with mispronounced Sanskrit words in contemporary yoga classes (Berila, Klein, & Jackson, 2016). The commodification of yoga through spiritual materialism is evident through manufactured yoga clothes, such as the name brand Lululemon (Lululemon, 2020) that has annual sales of more than one billion dollars (Bloomberg, 2019).

Finally, the economic sphere has more profound implications on the commodification of the sacred, which has repeatedly sought manifestation, and supremacy in capitalist culture (York, 2001), including commodification, perpetuated through the modern posture yoga movement. Rogers (2006) explains,

> That commodification is used in some accounts as if it was limited to the transformation of an object, person, or idea into something to be owned, bought and sold. This misses many cultural implications of commodification. In the condition of capitalism, any object that enters the exchange system is inescapably commodified. Commodification abstracts the value of an object (of form or person) so that it can enter systems of exchange. In this process, the use-value and the specifics of the labour and social relations imbued in the commodity are lost; it becomes equivalent to all other commodities. Also, commodification plays a crucial role in perpetuating unequal power relations. Eventually, many acts of appropriation even when carried out under the banner of 'honourable motives' such as cultural presentation and cross-cultural understanding function to undermine the cultures being appropriated and serve the interest of the dominant (p. 474).

The ramifications of the modern yoga movement's roots in commodification are manifested in ideas of buying wellness through clothes, worship of yoga teachers, and overpriced wellness foods (Demeter, 2006). Cultural appropriation leads to a deep misinterpretation of the yoga traditions and perpetuates stereotypes towards South Asians.

2.7 Trauma and Yoga

The body is central to healing from trauma (Berila, Klein, & Jackson, 2016). Theories of yoga and trauma provide an understanding of issues and concerns for marginalized mothers. For decades, feminist activists and academics have highlighted the ways in which trauma affects marginalized and oppressed populations (Lamb, 1999). The treatment of trauma within specific and oppressed populations requires a multilayered approach to demonstrate a link between evidence-based approaches, survivor engagement, cultural safety, and the need for community belonging and support (Status of Women Canada, 2018). Becky Thompsen (2017) explains that "Trauma theory can help teachers understand that when students have a trauma history (both named and not), this reality can leave them to shut down, overwhelmed and disengaged in their studies" (p. 10). Catlett and Bunn (2016) found that community-led yoga (combining modern posture yoga with traditional yoga teachings) programs must first utilize a trauma-informed lens to address individual and community violence, which is at the centre of yoga's philosophical underpinnings such as *ahimsa* (nonviolence). This can be transformative. There is a further need to understand how yoga for marginalized mothers with trauma can be theorized. Trauma theory seeks to understand human behaviour, coping mechanisms, and any problems that

result by examining traumatic events throughout one's life (Kawan & Martinez, 2016).

Increased evidence-based research on feminism, trauma, and healing is also needed (Brown, 2004). Feminists have advocated for the need for trauma survivor engagement (Brown, 2004) and for social and health programs that include client-centred models (Ullman & Townsend, 2008) that advance supportive relationships, teach new skills, increase safety, and respect, empower, and contribute to social change (Cohen, 2008) while empowering the client's capacity for functioning and self-care (Brown, 2004). Another essential concept is cultural safety, "which is the idea to provide quality care for people from different ethnicities and cultures within the cultural values and norms of the patient" (Brascoupé & Waters, 2009, p. 7). Cultural safe approaches must address power differentials and focus on the ways to reduce and eliminate racism and discrimination. A prominent issue when addressing trauma is that people using health care and social programs feel socially, culturally, emotionally, and physically safe (Brascoupé & Waters, 2009).

Trauma-informed practices are fundamental to any healing program for mothers. The concept of 'being' trauma-informed in the field of addictions and mental health introduced the theory that early sexual abuse was the cause of trauma and addictions (Herman, 2004). Trauma-informed practice guidelines indicate the core principles of trauma awareness, safety, trustworthiness, choice and collaboration, and building strength and skills as significant to health and wellbeing (Poole et al., 2003). There are many types of trauma that can be experienced by people who live with trauma survivors (Poole et al.,

2003). Evans Campbell (2008) explains the difficulty of collective complex trauma

> a collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation— [such as] ethnicity, nationality, or religious affiliation [have a legacy of trauma]. It is the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations and encompasses their psychological and social responses to such events (p.320).

Historical trauma is cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over a lifetime, emanating from massive group trauma (Poole et al., 2003). Trauma-sensitive is defined as being aware of how to create a safe space for an individual and often is used in educational settings such as K-12 schools (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). Trauma-informed practice takes into account the entire individual physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health and wellbeing (Poole et al., 2003).

There is some evidence-based research on yoga that suggests its physical and mental health benefits are plentiful. For example, yoga can relieve symptoms of depression (Shapiro et al., 2007), anxiety (Michalsen et al. 2005), obsessive-compulsive disorder (Shannahoff-Khalsa et al., 2005), and schizophrenia (Duraiswamy, Thirthalli, Nagendra, & Gangadhar, 2007). Also, trauma-sensitive yoga can relieve trauma and promote healing among youth (Spinazzola et al., 2011), with survivors of domestic violence (Clark et al., 2014), women with post-traumatic stress disorder (Mitchell et al., 2014), and veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress (Libby et al., 2012). In one randomized control trial, Van der Kolk et al. (2013) found that “yoga reduced post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms such as anxiety and suicide ‘with ‘effect size’ comparable to well-researched psychotherapeutic and psychopharmacologic approaches” (p. e559). However, most scientific work

on modern posture yoga “does not effectively address the roles of oppression in creating trauma” (Berila, Klein, & Jackson, 2016, p. 7). There remains a necessity for evidence-based research on feminism, trauma, and healing. Also needed is more evidence-based research to examine the link between yoga with demonstrated physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health benefits. Hoppner & Emerson (2012) found that there were four factors that emerged as particularly crucial for yoga with trauma survivors. These are: opportunities to experience the present moment, making choices and focus on being in control, feeling secure and competent to take practical actions, and moving in rhythms with others (Hoppner & Emerson, 2012).

2.8 Yoga and Addictions

Addictions is an overly used word in the English language (Alexander & Schweighofer, 1988) that is a socially constructed concept that has been created and accepted by the people in a society (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004) and conjures up stigma and shame in individuals (Matthews, Dwyer, & Snoek, 2017). Several studies have shown a positive use of yoga as a complementary therapy amongst those with substance abuse (Khanna, & Greeson, 2013). However, few studies have shown the relationship between other types of addictions such as gambling, social media, and yoga as therapeutic (Griffiths, 2007).

The concept of addiction has entered into all facets of culture and history. It has been rooted in the biomedical model as a disease (Granfield & Reinarman, 2014) that is also guided by the moral assumption that affects policies and regulates bodies. Within the medical model of disease, the term ‘addictions’ is centred on the abuse of substances (Surrey, 1997). There are

multiple approaches and various programs available to treat substance abuse and addictions, from traditional to alternative therapies. When focusing on the 'whole person' approach uses diverse methods and tools to assist in achieving, maintaining, and enhancing recovery there are improved health outcomes (Lu et al., 2009). In addition, there is a new social understanding in the role additions (American Psychological Association, 2013). For example, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Disorders was recently revised to include the expansion of addictions beyond its definition of alcohol and illicit substances (American Psychological Association, 2013). It now includes pharmaceutical drugs, the impact of the war on drugs, and the mass incarceration of people of colour as contributions to diagnosis in addictions (Grant & Chamberlain, 2016).

I draw on addiction as a theoretical concept rooted in multiple disciplines that include medical and social sciences. The concept of 'addiction' has slipped into all parts of our culture, and it is an important social justice issue (Hart, 2017). The medical view of drug addictions and behavioural addictions centres on the neurological pathways in the brain (Maté, 2010). These neurological pathways impact all types of addictions, including substance use and behavioural addictions (Maté, 2010). Nestler and Malenka (2004) identified that "trauma and early-life stress correlate with a shrunken hippocampus and amygdala, the regions of the brain that are important for memory and emotional well-being, respectively" (p. 75). Neuroscience shows that the brain responds to psychoactive drugs in the same way humans respond to pleasurable activities (Nestler & Malenka, 2004). However, the neuroscience of brain demonstrates that yoga can replace the pleasurable

effects of drugs on the brain (Jackson, 2017). The medical and governmental view of addiction (both drug and behavioural) as a brain disease serves to perpetuate injustice (Hart, 2017). There is a link between the medical view of addiction and the lack of awareness of the history of colonization and oppression of First Nations people who have higher rates of addictions. These higher rates are partly due to historical factors of oppression and colonization as Sullivan (2013) explains “The legacy of colonization and oppression, loss of culture and language and the resulting intergenerational trauma experienced by many First Nations people and communities since contact has significantly impacted health and wellbeing, especially in the context of substance abuse and related mental health issues” (p. 2). This injustice is compounded by a continued view of addiction that impacts some populations more than others or for communities ravaged by addictions. It is important to acknowledge that some communities are affected more severely than others and bring this injustice into the national discussion of addictions as a problem. Critical approaches to addictions that include gambling, eating, pornography, sex, consumerism, and social media (Olsen, 2011) suggest a more holistic perspective. For example, a harm reduction approach “provides an option for users to engage with peers, medical and social services in a non-judgemental way that will 'meet them where they are” (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2020, para 1).

Social control of marginalized populations through laws and public policies are designed to regulate people’s actions when engaging in addictive behaviours (Mehta, 2015). Today, when those who do not conform to socially prescribed norms are subjected to intensified attack, the social control of

gender and the reinforcing of traditional gender roles have come to play an increasingly central part (Dod & Stein, 1990). Also, in this way, feminist approaches to addictions include theories of race, gender, and sexuality as central (Mehta, 2015).

There is a need for more research about the meaning of addictions as a theoretical concept, rooted in social justice and to provide a deeper understanding of these social justice issues faced by marginalized populations. There is growing research that shows yoga practice as a popular approach in treating addictions (Cunningham, 2012). However, the evidence in support of the effectiveness of yoga for addiction is encouraging but inconclusive. Large RCTs are needed to better determine the benefits of yoga for addiction (Posadzki, Choi, Lee, & Ernst, 2014).

2.9 Yoga and Shamanism

Yoga and shamanism are linked because they are rooted in their ability to alter states of human consciousness. First, both the yogi and the shaman travel beyond ordinary reality and engage in a radical departure from conventional reality and consciousness (Feuerstein, 1996). Second, both the yogi and the shaman experience profound transformative effects on their mind, body, and spirit. However, the yogi travels inward to seek enlightenment while the shaman travels outward on their journey of the spiritual odyssey (Feuerstein, 1996). For example, the shaman demonstrates their mastery of fire by touching burning coals, whereas yogis excel in the act of self-heating [*tapas* or heat] – that is, in disciplining themselves to the point where sweat pours from all pores (Feuerstein, 1996). The shaman is viewed as a healer or miracle worker, whereas the yogi is a transmitter of knowledge. The shaman

seeks a magical journey into other realms for the sake of obtaining knowledge to make changes in the material realm (Feuerstein, 1996). Theories that bridge yoga and shamanism can broaden the understanding of health and wellness in contemporary culture. First, they can broaden knowledge about the ability of altered states of consciousness; they allow us to see our lives and ourselves with a broader lens and from different angles of perception than are ordinarily possible (Feuerstein, 1996). Second, they can have impacts on health and wellbeing through deeper embodiment. Third, both the yogi and shaman experience spiritual journeys. The yogi's ultimate goal is to go beyond the subtle levels of existence while the shaman is to realize their transcendental way of being (Feuerstein, 1996).

Both traditions have been diminished by colonialism and continue to be commodified through contemporary culture in similar ways. An example is the rise of neo-shamanism among non-indigenous peoples, a term that refers to a new method of seeking visions and healing that is rooted in neocolonialism, but is often viewed as cultural appropriation of Indigenous cultures, particularly in the Americas (Daniel, 1997). An examination of yoga and shamanism as theoretical concepts using a decolonial lens has the potential to for healing. Harvey and Wallis (2014) explain the paradox of shamanism in contemporary culture. The paradox is that shamanism is often culturally appropriated in Western culture as it offers a way of healing for some non-Indigenous peoples but in the context of harm towards Indigenous peoples. Shamans have campaigned against the appropriation of Indigenous practices by academics and neo-shamans and their representations as 'shamanism' (Harvey & Wallis, 2014). There is a need to further investigate the links

between yoga and shamanism as theoretical concepts because of their potential to alter states of consciousness.

2.10 Marginalized Mothers

Marginalized mother is a broad term used to identify populations of mothers impacted uniquely by race, gender, sexuality, class, and/or abilities within a present-day culture (Taylor & Bloch, 2018). There are many ways that mothers can be marginalized in society. In addition, they may encounter barriers which include classism, socioeconomic/income inequality, racism (e.g., immigrant and refugee mothers of colour), homophobia (e.g., lesbian mothers), ageism (e.g., teen mothers), ableism (e.g., mothers who raise children with developmental disabilities), and judgement over their marital/household status (e.g., single mothers) (Taylor & Bloch, 2018). Marginalized mothers face distinct and unique barriers to improvement of their health and wellness, including access to adequate housing, transportation, gender-based violence, poverty, trauma, and mental health. Marginalized mothers face overt and subtle forms of sexism and racism, along with stigmatization and stereotyping. They face distorted cultural representations, which often result in negative social stereotypes, such as being a 'bad' mother (Powell, 2010). Feminists have long advocated for the unheard voices of marginalized mothers, and there is a need to explore healing for this neglected and stigmatized population (O'Reilly, 2007). Finally, each population of marginalized mothers faces different barriers to improved health and wellbeing and healing from traumas.

Andrea O'Reilly (2007) defines feminist mothering as a feminist praxis that challenges patriarchal approaches to motherhood that are oppressive to

women. Feminist mothering contributes to an emerging holistic and interdisciplinary treatment approach for marginalized mothers by providing an alternative to patriarchal, heteronormative, racist and classist approaches to mothering (Green, 2011). Feminist mothering offers a rich theoretical perspective on motherhood across the lines of gender, sexuality, class, race, and disability while the central aim is to implement theories to empower mothers (O'Reilly, 2007). Feminist mothers engage in activities that can include contesting heteronormative approaches to parenting and the social construction of the nuclear family, and reimaging conceptions about motherhood and maternal activism (Green, 2011). The “institution of motherhood” continues to be questioned (Green, 2011; O’Reilly, 2007) and feminist mothering resists a patriarchal model in which the burden of work required for child-rearing falls solely upon women (Green, 2011). Present-day challenges of further integrating the complexity of gender, race, and class in the analysis regarding feminist mothering remains essential to research, in particular within populations of marginalized mothers.

2.11 Theoretical Framework: Decolonization

Broadly speaking, decolonization is the undoing of colonialism at the global level. More specifically, it is the progression of awakening to the evils that colonial nations have engaged in and used to establish and maintain their global domination over time (Hack, 2008). In this study, decolonization is used as the theoretical framework to explore the meaning of feminist-informed yoga and its potential healing benefits for marginalized mothers.

In the next paragraph, I explain the important principles that underlie decolonization and how decolonization intersects with other theoretical

underpinnings such as feminism. According to Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), decolonization of research is concerned with having "a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations, and values that inform research practices" (p. 1). Intellectual decolonization is a way to unlearn colonial designs which have made the colonized individuals feel inferior to them (Prasad, 2015). Escobar (2007) explains that decolonial theory proposes the increase in non-Western thought and in the understanding of different ways of knowing and worldviews. In this study, I draw on my own ancestors' ways of life. These are removed from the Western thought, which primarily Judeo-Christian. Decolonial theory is of the production of knowledge through a Western lens that enforces Western practices of study and thinking while minimizing non-Western discourses and traditions (Imas & Weston, 2012). Mohanty (1998) explains that much research "explains" women as if we are all white, cisgender and middle-class, but, in fact, women are diverse. In this study, decolonial feminist theory challenges what counts as knowledge, such as Western societies knowledge with a history of colonization. In addition, decolonial feminist theory centers gender in the project of decolonization for South Asian women based on their experiences and worldviews as being marginalized. Constructing new South Asian feminist theories creates new possibilities, new ways of reframing knowledge about traditions and ways of knowing.

2.12 Research Positionality

As a Jain woman of colour, I grew up in a home where I was taught a Jain way of life. Teachings such as yoga, meditation, vegetarianism, and nonviolence as the foundation of my cultural and spiritual identity were passed

on to me, but were highly misunderstood within the contemporary culture of my birth. These teachings were passed on to me as the foundation of my identity but were highly misunderstood within contemporary Canadian culture. Throughout my life, yoga has been central to both my cultural and feminist identity. More specifically, I have developed a deeper understanding of the experiences of overt and internalized racism in yoga spaces that I use as a platform to develop my own vision of feminist-informed yoga as a healing approach.

Since this is an autoethnography, it is important to identify some relation to my feeling about doing research about myself. I feel empowered to do research on myself as a Jain woman of colour, born and raised in a mid-sized Canadian city, along with exploring the yoga traditions that are deeply personal to my ancestors' ways of life. In addition, there is something healing about this research as I often ignored feelings of internalized racism in mainstream yoga studios for almost 20 years. Thus, for me, autoethnography represents the right to tell the truth as experienced by me. In addition, the right to tell my own truth means not waiting for others to express what they want known and what they understand about the subject I am studying. There are some pitfalls in engaging in this type of research, as it involves truth-telling and honesty to disclose which can involve a lot of exposure. In this study, I avoid these pitfalls by explaining my lived experiences and drawing on multiple theories to broaden its meaning.

2.14 Research Questions

1. What is the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga in contemporary Canadian culture?

2. What are some of the ways in which feminist-informed yoga can be applied as a healing approach to various populations of marginalized mothers in a mid-sized Canadian city?

3.0 Chapter Three: Methodology

A decolonizing theoretical framework guided this study as I engaged in an autoethnography to answer research questions #1 and #2. Also, I chose analytical autoethnography to understand that, as Denejkina (2017) explain, that “transmission of trauma in refugee families highlights the limited knowledge on transgenerational trauma, noting that a considerable amount of work is still needed to address the current gap in research” (p.218). I explore my own personal lived experiences through both a feminist and cultural lens and develop a theory of feminist-informed yoga in contemporary Canadian culture (See research question #1). In this autoethnography, I explore the potential relevance of feminist-informed yoga as a healing approach to various groups of marginalized mothers in a mid-sized Canadian city (see research question #2). As I am a marginalized single mother of colour, I provide some answers to both research questions, using text spinning and collaging, yoga, meditation, and journaling. The aim of this autoethnographic study is to facilitate social consciousness and societal change on perspectives about yoga and to reduce negative and oppressive cultural influences that continue to oppress marginalized mothers.

3.1 Autoethnography

Autoethnography (auto-*self,* ethno-*culture*), is a qualitative, self-reflective form of writing (Ellis, 2004; Maréchal, 2010) that involves vulnerability (Custer, 2014), and embodies creativity (Munro, 2011; Wiles, Crow, & Pain, 2011; Custer, 2014). It connects the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political (Ellis, 2004) while it draws on personal experiences (Holman, 2007), values a researcher’s relationship to

others (Ellis, 2004), and displays different people's meanings (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015). Pitard (2017) explains that autoethnography can encourage listening to our own internal dialogue,

> Listening to our internal dialogue that relies upon that dialogue being spontaneous, springing from a stillness of mind which allows our past experience to guide our present. The examination of this internal dialogue can reveal stimuli from our past experiences which we carry with us still.

Autoethnography offers stories that can potentially contribute to the lives of others by making people contemplative or compassionate about other people's lived experiences (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015). There are many ways scholars have used autoethnography to tell their stories. Tamas (2009) explored the use of traumatic experiences as the basis of autoethnography.

> If I am a scholar, my own trauma may offer ideal grist for the mill, a chance to get up close and personal with the gritty and abject without having to get clearance from an institutional ethics review board, while redeeming my losses by reframing them as sites of knowledge production. As a feminist postmodern researcher, I am committed to such passionate, reflexive scholarship. I find it exciting to read and frightening to produce (p. 2).

Like Tamas, I engage in an exploration of my own traumatic experiences, but I am concerned, by its ethical trespass. By ethical trespass, I mean the space between sharing my lived experiences and the parts of my experiences in which I feel safe and comfortable telling. I engage in analytical autoethnography, which allows me to reflect on experiences through the process of reflective journaling, yoga, and meditation, text spinning and collaging to describe the theoretical contributions of this research in both distinct and separate moments of the narrative (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015).

Text spinning and collaging are strategies that I used to start my writing process (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015). Over time, the collaging developed

into an internal logic through-line such as a theoretical idea or repeated way of sharing an experience. I use this through-line to continue my writing process. I engage in an analytic autoethnography that is rooted in the social-scientific paradigm. Anderson (2006) suggests that the following researcher characteristics are critical in analytic autoethnographic research:

> they are a full member in the research group or setting; visible as such a member in the researcher's published texts; committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena; participate in dialogue which informs beyond the self; and are committed to theoretical analysis. Within the spectrum of analytic and evocative autoethnography (p. 375).

Furthermore, Méndez (2013) explains that “analytic autoethnography is directed towards objective writing and analysis of a particular group, whereas evocative autoethnography aims toward researchers’ introspection on a particular topic to allow readers to make a connection with the researchers’ feelings and experiences” (p. 281). Denejkina (2017) explains that “analytic autoethnography aims to shed light on a broader set of social phenomena and is not just about evoking an emotional response or resonance from the audience, or documenting the personal experience of the researcher, or to produce an insider perspective on the issue studied” (p.218). To further explore, transgenerational trauma I employed a representational strategy in which I collected, organized and wrote the data collection portion in the first, second and third person but then, for the data analysis, I revised and presented the written text in the first and third person. I used both the first person and third person as my representational strategy. For example, I used the first person when expressing my own personal voice, and the third person if I wanted to ensure that I would be able to hide my identity. In my data

analysis, I reflected on the experiences from the past twenty years of practising posture yoga in various spaces and places and the experiences of growing up in a Jain way of life in a mid-sized Canadian city.

3.2 Data Collection

There are specific steps that I engaged upon in order to facilitate data collection for this autoethnography. Table 1 is the overview of data collection and analysis used in this autoethnography and highlights the steps I took overall.

Table 1: Overview of Data Collection and Analysis for Autoethnography	
Data Collection Steps	Completed Timeline
Step One: Lay Summary	February 1, 2019 (Start) 5 days
Step Two: Texting and Collaging	5 days
Step Three: Daily yoga and meditation, followed by reflective journaling	10 days
Data Analysis Steps	Completed Timeline
Step One: Thematizing	10 days
Step Two: Daily Evocative Writing	15 days
Step Three: Theorizing the Story	15 days
Step Four: Consider Story, Participants, Readers and Myself in Writing	10 days
Step Five: Editing my Work	10 days

While Table 2 is a more in-depth overview of the data collection.

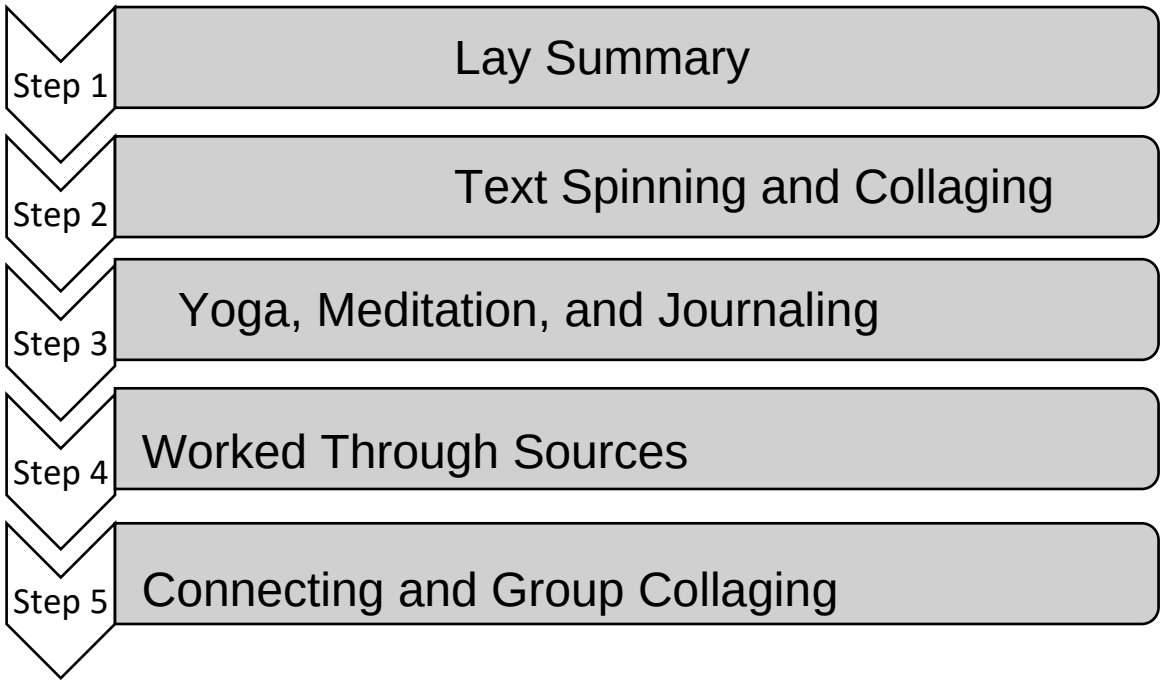
Table 2: Data Collection for Autoethnography		
Data Collection Steps	Description	Completed Timeline

Step One: Lay Summary	**Lay Summary Description**	Started on January 21, 2019
Who are you?	Personal background; a cultural, ethnic, or personal identity that was important for the reader to understand me.	5 days Daily 6 hours a day
What are you doing, and why?	Telling my personal story and what I brought to the field (topic), the theoretical framework and method that I used in exploring this field, and what I hoped to accomplish with this project.	5 days Daily 6 hours a day
How did you choose your site/occasion?	Disclosing how I came to this topic, site, and occasion.	5 days Daily 6 hours a day
How often and how long will you stay in the field, if any?	How often and long did I engage in an activity, site, or occasion?	5 days Daily 6 hour a day
What will be the results of your project?	Describe the form of stories, information and experiences I gathered and how I took this information and shared it and the anticipated audience of this information.	5 days Daily 6 hour a day
How will this benefit others?	How might my project enrich or contribute to others' lives?	5 days Daily 6 hour a day
Step Two: Texting and Collaging		
Read	Read through the works, writing and typing passages (in an excel spreadsheet) that I underlined or noted.	5 days Daily 6 hour a day
Yoga, Meditation and Reflective Journaling	Upon waking every day, I did 30 minutes of yoga, followed by 30 minutes of meditation for 30 days. Immediately following the yoga and meditation engaged in 30 minutes of reflective journaling for 30 days.	30 days Daily 1.5 hour a day
Work through Sources and make a list of entries	Worked through each of the sources one at a time, and made a collection of notable passages until I had several	5 days Daily 6 hour a day

	notable passages (record in an excel spreadsheet).	
Connecting and Grouping (Collaging)	Looked over the list entries, began connecting and grouping collaging – the different materialism in ways that make sense to/interest me (Excel spreadsheet).	5 days Daily 6 hour a day
Writing a story	Took the collaging ideas as the starting point for my account (in writing) (Word document).	5 days Daily 6 hour a day
Review Drafts and revisit collages	I continued spinning and collaging in multiple writing sessions, beginning by reading and then adding to the document that I was creating (Excel spreadsheet and Word).	5 days Daily 6 hour a day

Figure 5 provides a flow chart of the data collection steps I took in this portion of the research.

Figure 5: A Flow Chart of the Data Collection Steps I took in this Autoethnography



In step one, I provided a lay summary, which is defined as a document that provides details of the autoethnographic process and serves as a guide for me, the researcher (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015). The lay summary was used to provide an overview of the proposed research goals, which was essential for the 'insider research' of a culture, as it outlined specific access and responsibilities throughout the autoethnography (See Appendix Two: Lay Summary). A lay summary includes a description of who I was, what I was doing and why, how I came to choose the topic, and how this research may possibly benefit others/readers such as marginalized mothers.

Step two involved text spinning and collaging, which was the process of gathering 3-5 books and/or essays that I, the autoethnographer, had recently read or found myself revisiting often. I read through the works, writing and typing passages in an excel spreadsheet throughout the process. I chose the following books/articles in the process of gathering information. For research question #1 I used these books: '*The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali'* by Georg Feuerstein, '*The Path of Yoga'* by Georg Feuerstein, '*Feminist Theory'* by bell hooks, '*Yoga, the Body and Embodied Social Change: An Intersectional Feminist Analysis'*, edited by Beth Berila, Melanie Klein, and Chelsea Jackson, '*Overcoming Trauma through Yoga'*, by David Emerson and Elizabeth Hooper. For research question #2, I used the journal article entitled, '*Indigenous Women of the Amazon Rainforest: The Woman Shaman of the Yawana Tribe,*' by Thalji Nadia Khalil, and Oksana Yakushko, '*Single Mothers by Choice'*, by Jennifer Ajandi, '*Revolutionary Parenting'* by bell hooks, '*Introduction from Women Born*' by Adrienne Rich, and '*Marginalized Mothers'* by Tiffany Taylor, and Katrina Bloch.

In step three, I engaged in daily yoga and meditation, followed by reflective journaling, as part of the data collection process. The purpose of this process was to increase my mind, body, and spirit connections to explore the meaning of feminist-informed yoga from my own lived experiences as a marginalized mother. Yoga and meditation were an intervention that helped me reflect on and organize my thoughts on my own lived experiences. In particular, yoga and meditation as an intervention helped me focus on the practice of yoga in a contemporary culture, raised in a Jain way of life and my participation in modern posture yoga culture for over twenty years in a mid-sized Canadian city. To help me express and reflect on the experiences of yoga and meditation, I engaged in the method of reflective journaling. Reflective journaling helped me document my analytical and conceptual thinking on the meaning of feminist-informed yoga. Journaling, in its numerous procedures, is a means of recording personal feelings, daily involvements, and developing insights. In particular for this study, reflective journaling helped in the process of reflecting on the inequalities between my expectations and actual experience that enabled me to become more engaged with the process of my learning. For example, the ability to quiet and still the mind (*Patanjali's yoga sutra 1.2. citta vritti nirohda*) is needed to engage in proper reflective journaling, hence the practice of yoga and meditation prior to this step. Steps one to three were ways to engage in a process of collecting sources but also reflective journaling that was enhanced by the practice of yoga and meditation.

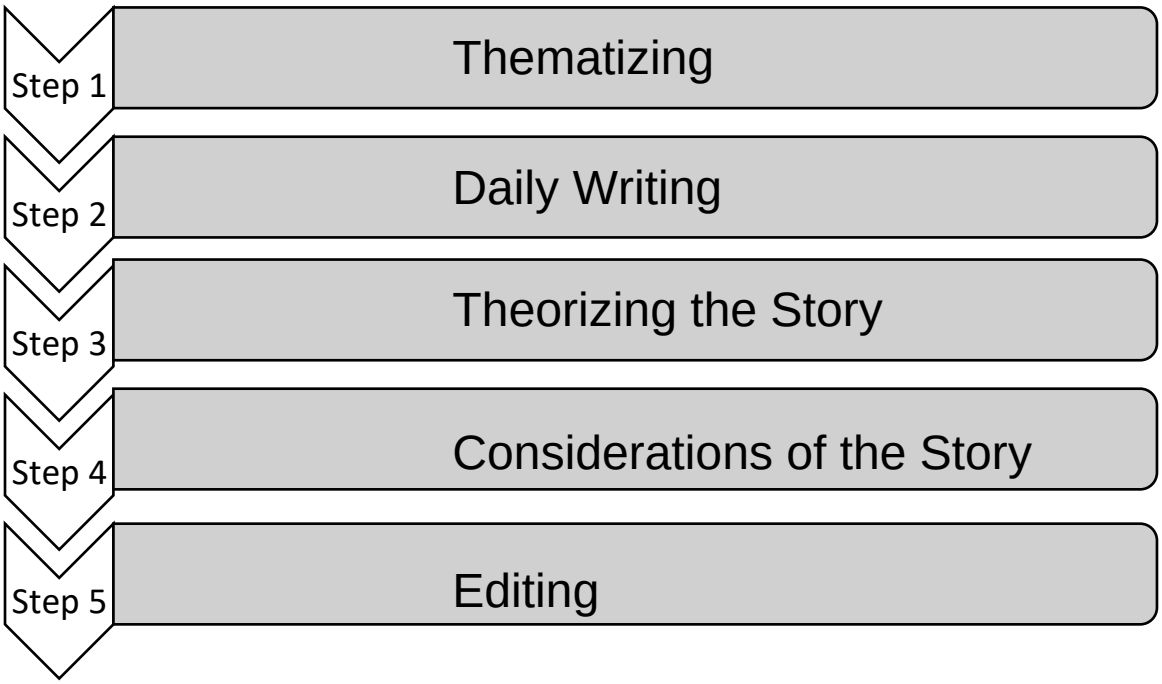
In step four, I worked through sources (texts) and made a list of entries. I worked through each source one at a time, and I collected essential

passages until I had several notable passages recorded in an excel spreadsheet and later in a word document. In step five, I began connecting and grouping (collaging) the list of entries, and I was able to connect and group/collage the different materials (e.g., books, texts, and reflective journaling text) in ways that made sense to/interested me in an excel spreadsheet and later in a word document. Then I wrote the story, taking the collaged ideas as a starting point into my account/writing, recorded in a word document. Then I began to review drafts and revisit collages and continued text spinning and collaging in multiple writing sessions, beginning by reading and then adding to the document.

3.3 Data Analysis

The primary data analysis focused on making sense of the writings I prepared during the data collection. Figure 6 provides a Flow Chart of Data Analysis Steps I took in this autoethnography.

Figure 6: A Flow Chart of the Data Analysis Steps I took in this Autoethnography



Step one*, thematizing*, is the grouping and categorizing of data gathered through text spinning and collaging and reflective journaling into a handful of groups and categories on an excel spreadsheet. Thematizing helped to imagine a consistent pattern in the narrative and explicitly connect personal experience with culture (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015). In this study, I identified a handful of grouped themes and developed a real character (myself). Through this process, I was able to connect myself and my experiences to help create knowledge, understanding, and meaning around what happens in my lived experiences.

In step two, I engaged in daily evocative writing in order to evoke thick descriptions of experiences. In this step, I chose a *narrative voice*, *shaped the academic plot and story*, and *considered the overall story*. At this point in the study, I used a representational strategy in which to hide and eliminate any identifying information in the story (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015). Autoethnographers are able to choose to write in first-, second-, or third-person voice and I employed a representational strategy to ensure the protection of confidentiality and privacy. I also used this representational strategy because it helps to distance the readers from the story and encourage them to accept the narrator's (my own) personal and cultural analysis as accurate, complete, and correct. In addition, this representational strategy allowed for all names, locations, and time periods to be changed or removed to ensure privacy and confidentiality. I shaped the academic plot and story by asking specific questions: What story are you telling about yourself? What does the culture/context teach you about your experiences? What is

your role in shaping the possible meaning of your story? (Adams, Jones, Ellis, 2015).

In step three, I began theorizing the story to articulate the relationships between theory and story (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015). In this autoethnography, there is a reciprocal relationship between theory and story that explained the nuances of personal experiences. The story is the mechanism that illustrated and embodied these nuances and happenings. Using the process of the story as a theory helps me to understand my personal experiences. I completed this step by reading through my own writing to determine which stories to use in order to theorize understanding, interpreting, and analyzing personal experiences. Autoethnographers link theories with stories and stories with theories; in particular, I used citation (the quoting of texts) as a means for the articulation of ideas and feelings and to identify and develop a conclusion (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015).

In step four, I considered the story, readers, and myself in the writing. I determined the narrative probability in which the story was coherent, flowed together, and was free of contradictions. Correcting for contradictions consisted of checking for logical conclusions that were not opposite of each other. I did this by asking, could the story have happened in the way the narrator described? Next, I determined the narrative fidelity in which I considered the truth of my story and the soundness of its resonating values by asking, do the actions and interactions in the story happen for good reasons? And, are the lessons of the story relevant to me and valuable for my life? I also considered the relational ethics in my writing, which included ideas of self-indulgence, blaming and shaming, heroics, self-righteousness, and

disengagement. Finally, step five of the data analysis involved editing my work to ensure meaningful examples of self and included checking themes. It also involved checking for accuracy and precision.

As part of my analytic strategy, I used a decolonizing theoretical framework to guide my autoethnography. In particular, the production of knowledge through a Western lens that enforces practices of study and thinking while it minimizes discourses and practices in the lives of non-Western traditions (Imas & Weston, 2012). In addition, decolonization was also included as a theoretical framework of intellectual decolonization in which the colonial designs have made the colonized individuals feel inferior to them (Prasad, 2015). Finally, I used decolonial feminist theory that centers gender in the project of decolonization for South Asian women based on their experiences and worldviews as being marginalized. I constructed new South Asian feminist theories that create new possibilities and new ways of reframing knowledge about traditions and ways of knowing.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations as an autoethnographer were not underestimated. I received ethical approval from the University of Manitoba Human Research Ethics Board at Fort Garry Campus. In this study, relational ethics were heightened for me as the autoethnographer (Ellis, 2004) as “using personal experiences, not only implicated myself with my work but also close and intimate others” (Adams, 2006, p. 75). I ensured the privacy and safety of others by altering identifying characteristics such as circumstance, topics discussed, or characteristics like names, places, or appearances. In this study, I was concerned with maintaining the anonymity of other participants,

as I was mindful of the relational risk to my family, friendships, or acquaintanceship networks (Tolich, 2004). Data analysis was presented in the first and third person, as a relational strategy to reduce relational risk. I anticipated future vulnerabilities for myself and others, as any autoethnography is a permanent ‘inked tattoo’ (Tolich, 2004). In order to reduce this type of relational risk and anticipate future vulnerabilities to the self and others, I changed names, broad dates, and changed or omitted locations (Morse, 2002). I assumed that all people mentioned in the text would read it one day (Ellis, 2004), and altering this information may reduce harm in the future as reading this autoethnography may evoke emotional distress.

As I was the only research subject, and I used a representational strategy to protect confidentiality and privacy, I did not need to obtain informed consent from any participant. I was aware of the potential risks of harm to myself, and I accepted the risks (Ellis, 2004). In many small groups and communities, I may be quite easy to identify, which was a concern as I situated this research.

4.0 Chapter Four: Theoretical Foundation of a Feminist-Informed Yoga

In chapter four, I answer the research question, “What is the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga in contemporary Canadian culture?” I focus my response into two main areas: culture and feminism. Both of these terms resonated with me throughout the process of writing about the meaning of feminist-informed yoga. My cultural identity as a second-generation Jain woman of colour who learned about a Jain way of life through my parents, in particular my own mother, helped situate my critical perspectives on modern yoga. I draw on the meaning of culture from Historical and Religious Studies perspectives. Specific contributions began with exploring the connections between my cultural identity as rooted in the yoga traditions. The yoga traditions include a Jain way of life, the *sāmkhya* philosophy, the yoga sutras of *Patanjali* and the eight limbs of yoga, the meaning of the *guru* traditions, and the modern posture yoga movement. The cultural and spiritual traditions of South Asian women in Canadian culture are connected to the yoga traditions. However, in contemporary culture, these spiritual and cultural traditions of South Asian women remain fundamentally essentialist. In response to my research question, I challenge what Narayan (2000) questions as the ‘gender-essentialist’ representations and images of South Asian women. In particular, I consider how South Asian women are as a group of varied persons whose morals, ways of life, and political commitments differ?

A feminist-informed yoga does not fall into the same ego-based traps identified in modern yoga movement. This is because feminist-informed yoga begins with the study of yoga and the yoga traditions in the context of healing

from marginalization and oppression. The mind frame required by a feminist-informed yoga is egoless, and therefore all its participants embody the qualities of empathy, kindness, nonjudgment, and unconditional love. Due to these factors, there is a potential for holistic healing. Also, feminist-informed yoga can be practiced in a private space such as at home or in community spaces or yoga studios (whatever feels safer). A Jain way of life, connects the mind-body-soul. It is a way of life that I observed. Feminist-informed yoga, when practiced in a safer space, is possible. *Patanjali's sutra 1.2* is central to a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga because it raises the question of how we can still or quiet the mind in the context of marginalization and oppression. For example, you can draw on *Patanjali's sutra 1.2* but you have to make it work and do the work. South Asian immigrant and refugee women do bring and practice yoga traditions to the context of a racist Canadian society. While, I do not believe that anyone should be prevented from doing yoga. I do believe that yoga and yoga traditions should be passed on as knowledge through generations of South Asian women, and this should be recognized.

My theoretical foundation for a feminist-informed yoga draws on feminism, in particular, my own lived experiences as a feminist activist and now academic. I also draw on feminist intersectional perspectives on yoga, cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and commodification of yoga, trauma, and addictions, and the link between yoga and shamanism as key to my theoretical foundation. All of these can contribute to an informed feminist yoga. Throughout this chapter four, I identify the potential contributions to public health that might be transferable across diverse health contexts.

This chapter begins with a broad definition of feminist-informed yoga within a decolonial theoretical foundation. Then I argue that yoga needs to be decolonized since it has failed to empower South Asian women. I then explore how feminist-informed yoga is connected with the yoga traditions, in particular, *ahimsa* (non-violence) in the context of domestic violence. I introduce the meaning of *guru* traditions in feminist-informed yoga, in particular the idea of *guru* consciousness. Then I discuss the modern posture yoga and how feminist-informed yoga can shift the focus away from the problems associated with modern yoga. I draw upon autoethnography that has shaped the meaning of a feminist-informed yoga. Then I explain how feminist-informed yoga relates to cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and commodification of yoga. I continue to discuss feminist-informed yoga and trauma, drawing on trauma theory and studies. Then I draw on addictions as a social justice issue which can include both substance use and behavioural addictions. Finally, I connect yoga and shamanism as part of the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga.

4.1 Defining a Feminist-Informed Yoga

A broad *definition* of feminist-informed yoga includes both culture and feminism as central to its foundation within a decolonial theoretical lens. Yoga can be defined in Sanskrit to mean '*union*' (Butera, 2006, p. 199) and is derived from the verbal root yuj-, which means, "to harness, prepare, equip, or fasten" (Feuerstein, 2011, p. 2). Feminist-informed yoga takes into account culture and feminism, which are both large portions of my identity as a yoga practitioner. The vision I have for a feminist-informed yoga includes but does not end with the creation of safe spaces for *asana* (posture) practice (Cook-

Cottone & Douglass, 2017). My vision for a feminist-informed yoga embraces awakening and spiritual transformation with the use of the yoga traditions as central to its theoretical foundation. The yoga traditions delve deeply into yoga philosophy and history. This can include spiritual growth and personal development within the context of a patriarchal society.

From a cultural perspective, I situate myself as a second-generation Jain woman of colour born and raised in a mid-sized Canadian city, but also as part of the history of the larger South Asian diasporic populations throughout the world. I position my lived experiences from the perspective of a single mother of colour who has been a feminist community activist, Women's and Gender Studies instructor, and yoga teacher. Since I was very young, I identified as a feminist because I was witness to violence against South Asian women and the sexist regulation of South Asian's women's bodies through practices related to traditional gender roles. As a teenager, I sought out spaces for feminist activism and built relationships with those who wanted to improve the conditions for women in the world. During university, I studied Women's and Gender Studies, and I completed an honours degree along with doing years of paid and mostly unpaid work in the women's movement, including running a women's centre, being a counsellor in feminist and lesbian health clinics, working as a doula, and much later as an academic feminist, teaching Women's and Gender studies. These years of lived experiences, in the context of living in the mid-sized Canadian city where there were very few feminists of colour, has helped me to understand the need for more diversity in the women's movement and I hope to continue my contribution to the women's movement. In addition to that, I wear another hat: I am a former

infectious disease epidemiologist, a scientist who studied the health and human rights issues of water access amongst a group of Indigenous people in Northern Manitoba, Canada. For many years, I worked in research with Indigenous people in the province of my birth, on various health and social issues. All of these experiences shed light on the meaning of feminist-informed yoga for me in contemporary culture.

Central to a definition of feminist-informed yoga are the ideas of critical and cosmic consciousness. Critical consciousness “is a feminist idea that focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world and allows for the perception and exposure of social and political contradictions” (Spivak, 1978, p. 241). Critical consciousness also means “taking action against the oppressive elements in one's life that are illuminated by that understanding” (Mustakova-Possardt, 2003, p. 203). Paulo Freire (2005) articulated that a person develops critical consciousness when they utilize a critical perspective to examine societal systems that are oppressive and are unjust to disadvantaged populations. A cosmic consciousness “means higher forms of consciousness and a more intuitive knowing than factual understanding” (Sheldrake, McKenna, & Abraham, 2001, p. 75).

What is consciousness? It is something that we all have, and if so, why does it remain one of the most mysterious human traits? This is a quality that each human being possesses. I can be aware of my consciousness during waking times when I am in deep contemplation or even pondering the vastness of the universe. To better understand what consciousness is, I will attempt to define what it means. Perhaps it is that state of wakefulness where I am aware of my surroundings, or it could be defined as a sense of deeper

self-awareness. Since time immemorial, philosophers have debated the exact nature of consciousness and what it means to be a sentient being. Advances in neuroscience have provided a clearer picture of how the brain works and demonstrated the regions in the brain where visual and auditory memories are processed and stored (Yu & Meyyappan, 2006). Scientists have even been able to transmit thoughts from one person to another due to advanced neurotechnology (Yu & Meyyappan, 2006). However, the source of consciousness continues to elude even the most diligent of seekers. For example, some poist that unified consciousness theory in which "the universe is a conscious being in which space, time, energy, matter, and even biology is created by one universal consciousness" (Sheldrake, McKenna, & Abraham, 2001, p. 75).

At the heart of a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga is a connection to the cosmic consciousness. Yoga offers a way to heal people from the trauma of marginalization and oppression. When taught in informed ways, it can provide spaces for healing, transformation, and spiritual awakening. It identifies the *Patanjali sutra* 1.2 to find a connection to the inner self. Once the inner self is healed, the practice of yoga helps to connect to the cosmic consciousness. We are all born and connected to the universe but our channels to the universe are blocked because of our trauma from oppression. The practice of feminist-informed yoga helps to open the channels to help connect to our cosmic consciousness. Deepak Chopra (2014) explains

> We are so used to assigning consciousness only to human thought that it takes some adjustment to see it as universal, or cosmic, applying at all levels. But the label applied to mystics, saints, and sages, both East and West, really denotes those who have escaped the limitations of everyday perception. Their experiences supply abundant evidence—thousands of years' worth—that the mind can look at itself and experience what

> consciousness is. If you strip away all religious associations, higher consciousness is observational and experiential; the mind looks directly at itself rather than outward at things. Things constitute Maya in the Indian tradition, a word somewhat misleadingly translated as “illusion” but which works better if understood as appearance or distraction. It also implies impermanence. The world out there appears to be self-sustained, distracting us from the truth: Without consciousness, nothing is experienced, either in here or out there. Cosmic consciousness, then, isn’t just real—it’s totally necessary. It rescues physics and science in general from a dead-end—the total inability to create mind out of matter—and gives it a fresh avenue of investigation (para. 2-3).

In the above section, I introduced the meaning of a feminist-informed yoga that includes both culture and feminism. I drew on the meaning of both yoga and the yoga traditions as central to my theoretical foundation. Specifically, I explored ways that feminist-informed yoga could embrace awakening and spiritual transformation through *Patanjali’s sutra 1.2* and the concepts of critical to cosmic consciousness.

4.2 Decolonization as Feminist-Informed Yoga

In this next section, I focus on explaining a decolonial approach to a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga, in particular the British Raj’s colonization of India which thrived amidst Orientalism and ethnocentrism in the development of modern posture yoga. The British Raj’s colonization of India continues to be felt in the lack of cultural representations of South Asian yogi women in the mid-sized Canadian city of my birth. The modern posture yoga movement thus needs to be decolonized since its primary focus on commodification fails to empower South Asian women in Western culture when it was introduced by the East, the *gurus* were mocked by the West (Douglass, 2007). The true meaning of yoga was lost in translation. Also, the British Raj viewed *yogis* as freaks and wanted to distance themselves from Indian freak *yogis*. Yoga scholar Laura Douglas (2007) explains that Western

yoga researchers may have propagated a sexist and racist agenda that was harmful to the people of the Indian subcontinent and, in particular, to the Indian diaspora because they wrongly assumed that everyone in North America was Euro-American like themselves. This assumption removed the Indian diaspora and was rooted in an Orientalist mindset. This belief led to imitation or depiction of images from the Eastern world in the West (Said, 1979). Eurocentric people adopted yoga to fit their culture, to accommodate the practice of yoga for their own population of people without consideration of Eastern minorities. Yoga was disconnected from Asian people. The Eurocentric reinterpretation of yoga for their own people as something special and unique is colonialism.

A decolonial approach removes modern posture *yogis* as the central figures of yoga and grounds a feminist-informed yoga in the lived experiences of the spiritual and cultural traditions of South Asian women of the Canadian diaspora. I am also concerned about prematurely eliminating old traditional practices and substituting them for new ones, only because it is possible to do so, such as in the erasure of the yoga traditions. I examine the modern posture yoga movement through the lens of ethnocentrism, which is at the heart of this removal. Brown (1964) explains that ethnocentrism is defined as the application of the norms of one's own culture to that of others and is one aspect of power. This is because the British Raj extracted yoga from India during the period of colonialism, an era in which the British viewed *yogis* in India as freaks (Korpela, 2010). As a result of British colonization, yoga was exported from India and today is manifested in the world as modern posture yoga. It was during this same time that the British Raj used the strategy of

divide and rule, which resulted in the death and displacement of millions of Indians (Iyer, 2010). The scars of this divide remain evident today in modern India, through Hindu-Muslim divides situated in India and Pakistan (Bates, 2011).

Colonial stereotypes rooted in orientalism often depict South Asian women in an othered light. These stereotypes have led to misrepresentations of South Asian women by the colonial imagination in the West. Hall (2002) explains that stereotyping tends to occur when there are gross inequalities of power. Dierdra (1972) situates binary oppositions like us/them, within a violent hierarchy in which one group always had the upper hand. In this case, the 'us' were South Asians of India and the 'them' were the British Raj. The colonization of India remains central to the misunderstanding of the meaning of yoga. Since the modern posture yoga movement was part of a larger picture of colonialism (Dierdra, 1972).

Central to the feminist movement is gender equality. However, modern yoga research fails to address sexism embedded in both modern yoga practice and historical yoga traditions (Douglass, 2007), in both of which liberation or moksha of the soul is understood to follow a male paradigm. This is sexist. For example, in Jainism, moksha (liberation) is only attainable by men, never women, and in modern yoga, Indian men were the founders and role models of modern yoga in the West. Furthermore, the most famous South Asian yoga teachers that grew prominent in North America were males (e.g., Bikram and Iyengar). However, as Singleton & Goldberg (2013) points out:

> India, like so many other places on the planet, is sexist and racist. Women have been treated like second class citizens in India for centuries. But yoga is not the cause of this sexism. Men are the cause. Sexist, elitist, bigoted men are the cause.

The modern posture yoga that emerged in the West is also sexist and racist.

The theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga addresses the sexism and racism by making South Asian diasporic women central. Cultural representations of *yogis* in Canadian yoga culture are still lacking, such as South Asian women of the Indian-diaspora. For example, no South Asian woman have ever been on the cover of the *Yoga Journal*. In addition, more recently, several South Asian male yoga teachers have been accused of sexual misconduct by their former students in North America (Singleton & Goldberg, 2013). The negative representation of South Asian male yoga teachers is harmful to the Indian diaspora. This is because it occurs in the context of few positive representations of South Asian women yoga teachers in Canada. When popular media always portrays yoga taught by South Asian men who have been accused of multiple cases of sexual misconduct, such as Bikram, it takes away from the potential of yoga to foster healing. For example, the one incident by Bikram denotes the entire culture of South Asian men teaching yoga, and this can reflect negatively on the whole practice of yoga when taught by South Asian men. A recent increase in more South Asian women becoming yoga teachers should be better represented as well, there are no statistics on this.

Eliminating sexism in some cultural and religious yoga traditions need to be done away with. For example, these traditions remain patriarchal as they openly advocate that being born a woman precludes someone from ultimate liberation (Hackett, 1989). At the heart of this, is the role of religion in supporting sexism:

> The role of religion in strengthening patriarchy in society is all too obvious. To state that religion is the most potent force and an essential nurturing factor behind patriarchy would not be an exaggeration. What is ironic is that most of the organised religions of today were not discriminatory, to begin with. In fact, many scholars contend that religions were not patriarchal in the early stages of organised life. It is believed that early religions, or more appropriately worship, centred on female Goddesses during prehistoric times. It is believed that prehistoric societies and belief systems were matriarchal as evident from their feminine-themed iconography (Amber, 2017).

Correspondingly, can women in the Indian-diaspora address patriarchy embedded within their own culture and the devaluation of Indian women in many spheres of life (Bhopal, 2018). For example, South Asian diasporic women can challenge the role of arranged marriage, sex selection, and gender inequality within their homes. In this autoethnography, I am seeking a deeper understanding of the role of South Asian women in the history of the yoga traditions and an application of that history to critically examine problems in the modern posture yoga movement.

An enlightened yoga culture must also try to advance the place of women in society, primarily because yoga provides the possibility of understanding what enlightenment might be in a culture that does not see men as superior to women. Handa (2003) explains there are equivalents between colonial and Canadian racism and that the South Asian diaspora reflects, in essential ways, the ‘Indian-nation state’. For example, in the diasporic context, young South Asian women continue to make boundaries based on cultural differences. These boundaries are maintained through the notions of femininity that regulate South Asian women’s bodies such as how it is adorned with costumes, and where bodies go, meaning women can only go to certain places at certain times (Handa, 2003). For example, my mother used to be very happy with a bindis on her forehead, because it denoted that

she was married to her husband and he represented security in a foreign country. But she found that the local Canadian population mocked her. Also, as a married woman my mother was happy to wear her bracelets which denoted marriage.

4.3 Feminist-Informed Yoga and the Yoga Traditions

In this section, I present a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga that includes aspects of the yoga traditions such as the Jain way of life, the *sāmkhya* philosophy, the yoga sutras of *Patanjali,* the eight limbs of yoga, and critiques of the modern posture yoga movement. I draw on all these aspects from the yoga traditions in the development of a theoretical foundation. I argue that all of these need to be recontextualized in contemporary Canadian culture. Also, the role of violence in South Asian diasporic women's lives and the reflection of that violence on the yogic tradition of *ahimsa* (non-violence) in which my ancestors believed as their way of life will be explored.

A Jain way of life is rooted in an ancient disciplined way of life that includes the practice of vegetarianism/veganism, yoga/meditation, and respect for the environment. How does understanding of a disciplined way of life shape the development of theoretical foundation for feminist-informed yoga. Yoga is not about posture alone; it is about the experiences of becoming one (i.e., the union). What is the union? What can unite with what? For example, *Patanjali's* second yoga sutra 1.2 c*itta* (consciousness) *vritti* (fluctuations) *nirodha* (quieting of) the mind, is a central definition of yoga (Feuerstein, 2011). I purport that it is fundamental to develop the mind so it goes through a more disciplined way of life that allows for clear thinking, and a

healthier and mindful life. More precisely, the principle of *ahimsa* (non-violence), is the central practice in the Jain way of life is at the heart of a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga for me as it centres my mind, body, and spirit and draws me closer to a union. *Ahimsa* (non-violence) also brings together the world of nature including the souls of animals, plants, and even rocks (one-sensed beings) as central to a Jain way of life (Chapple, 2013). *Ahimsa* (non-violence) may have relevance to other Jain women of colour in the Canadian diaspora. For example, *ahimsa* is the main principle that I wish to pass on to my daughter as part of a way of life and central to a feminist-informed yoga is the creation of a non-violent yoga space. This space can be either in the home or in a yoga studio.

DasGupta (2007) explains that domestic violence is substantial in Jain immigrant communities. For example, in 2008 Jansen, Henderson & McKay highlighted incidences of extreme violence in the previous few years among South Asian women, which I have given an example.

> Since late 2006, three pregnant or newly mothering women and one mother of pre-teen children have been murdered in Surrey, British Columbia. A fifth woman was shot and critically injured. Charges were laid against the women's husbands in three cases; a fourth husband committed suicide. The association of family violence during pregnancy with adverse fetal or neonatal outcomes has been well established but in recent times maternal mortality is recognized as another tragic consequence.

Correspondingly, what is the relationship with violence in recent immigrant and refugee populations? Jansen, Henderson & McKay (2008) explain that

> An Indian immigrant woman often comes to Canada totally dependent on a spouse, in most cases unaware of immigration laws, and with few, if any, support networks available. This, in combination with isolation by language, geography, and culture creates vulnerability, which enhances the potential for abuse. Women coming to Canada from South Asian countries tend to be further separated from resources by lack of skills and work experience and by marginalization in the labour force. There

> are no Canadian studies reporting on the prevalence of family violence perpetrated against South Asian women. An American study reported a 40% prevalence of violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in a current relationship. A population-based study from India reported a range of 18% to 45% among health regions for physical abuse (p.1045).

The role of patriarchal violence in modern-day South Asian diasporic communities is often witnessed by children in the home. How then can we reintroduce the concept of *ahimsa* as an opening discussion to the intersection of religion and violence against women in South Asian diasporic communities in Canada? For example, I should offer feminist-informed yoga classes that centralize the teaching on the principle of *ahimsa* in the community, or even in temples, for South Asian women in Canada. The epidemic of violence in the lives of South Asian women of the diaspora can be seen as more substantial extension of other issues within these communities in Canada. For example, many refugees and immigrants are under a lot of stress in a new country such as Canada and for some, the fall-back on to observed patterns of violence in their country of origin is a reaction to that stress. Jansen, Henderson, & McKay (2008) explain that

> Since domestic violence is still generally a taboo subject in the South Asian community, opportunities to advertise services and support agencies openly are limited. In many cases workshop participants representing agencies serving South Asian women had not met one another before and were unaware of the full range of services available. A poster in a physician's office listing community resources for women experiencing family violence was suggested as a simple and effective contribution towards safety (p. 1047).

The problem of violence is the result of the broader patriarchal cultural permissions that allow for the degradation of women in both South Asian communities in Canada but also other predominantly South Asian communities across the world (Bhopal, 2018). For example, in India, hundreds of millions of girls and women face persistent degradation (Watts, &

Zimmerman, 2002) while more than one-hundred million girls remain missing (Sen, 2017). Indian and Indian-diasporic populations are deeply patriarchal as evidenced by their profound preference for boys and routine practice of sex-selection (Raghuram, & Sahoo, 2008). I contend that many diasporic Indian women can be traumatized in other less obvious ways. Indian and India diasporic women's oppression begins in private lives, within their families, with some girls being cloistered in their households and told to cook, clean, and serve men (Krishnan, 2015). This gendered patriarchal behaviour consolidates power with men.

Some Indian diasporic women often experience the patriarchal culture of violence in their lives in Canada. The training of Indian-diasporic girls into 'good womanhood' cannot be viewed outside the context of sexual violence and molestation of South Asian girls and women, which is also prevalent in patriarchal South Asian cultures. For example, forty-two percent of girls in India have been sexually abused (Hill & Marshall, 2018). The context in which many Indian girls are raised should be questioned as they are often told to be 'good'. This often means being quiet or not having an opinion as central to their development into 'good' womanhood. This is often very different from how their brothers are told to be good. Another problem is that Indian-diasporic women and men may believe that violence towards women is acceptable. For example, fifty percent of men and women in India believe that, occasionally, women deserve a beating (Cislaghi & Bhattacharjee, 2017). There is a need to re-centre the moral and ethical foundation of yoga in contemporary culture as central to the unlearning of violence. The re-learning of *ahimsa* is central to this unlearning. I situate my lived experiences as a

second-generation South Asian Canadian who has experienced different types of violence throughout her life. *Ahimsa* (nonviolence) is central to Indian-diasporic populations, in particular in Canada as unlearning violence is central.

Feminists have been discussing gender-based violence in many communities across Canada for decades (Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottmoeller, 2002), including the unique and distinct ways it affects immigrant and refugee communities (Shirwadkar, 2004). Also, “women (including cis women and transgendered women) and non-binary immigrants and refugees face exceptional barriers to access support for violence or abuse” (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, 2020).

The yoga traditions can offer a more profound intellectual engagement with the cultural and feminist concerns about modern yoga. *Samayika*, a daily highly focused meditation which is a common practice in a Jain way of life, is rooted in the yoga traditions that sustain health and can be practiced in any space or place including businesses or homes. For me, as a lay Jain person, growing up as part of the Indian-diaspora, observing my grandmother practice *samayika* was my introduction to meditation as central to our way of life. However, as I grew older and sought out similar types of meditative spaces, I tried to find healing in modern yoga studios that offered a commercialized version of meditation which became damaging. This is because of what Cebolla, Demarzo, Martins, Soler, & Garcia-Campayo (2017) identified as “that lack of knowledge about experiences related to traditional meditation practices such as detaching them from a religious or cultural context, which can result in their misinterpretation as unpredictable events and their

misdiagnosis as physiological or psychological disorders resulting from the practice" (p. 4).

Yoga in Jainism focuses on the subtle effects caused by *karma* or actions in each individual which become responsible for one's rebirth and present-day experiences (Feuerstein, 1996). *Karma* (action) particles "are attracted to the soul by the actions of that soul" (Chapple, 1990, p. 33) and are a central concept of Jain cosmology. I centre the knowledge of *karma* through redefining the experiences of what it means to live a *Jain way of life* in contemporary Canadian culture. *Karma* "defines what it means to be Jain and asserts that their traditions perceive no difference in terms of the soul between humans and animals" (Chapple, 1990, p. 33) and protects them from committing any kind of violence towards any living being. Decolonization of yoga brings forth the Jain idea of equality of all living beings, which is in contrast to the ways in which the 'West' traditionally relates to non-human animals, namely by mastery or domination over them.

Centering the ethical teachings of a Jain way of life in its theoretical foundation holds that it is possible to both modify *karma* and to obtain release from it (Jain, 2000). Christopher Chapple (2008) explains that human moral actions,

> …form the basis of the transmigration of the soul (*jiva*). Jainism does assert that differences exist between humans and animals in terms of physiological qualities and in terms of birthplace (e.g., animals are born in the animal realms while plants are born in the plant realm in Jain cosmos), but this difference does not constitute a difference in its moral worth (Chapple, 2008, p. 200).

Five precepts govern and define the life of both practitioners of yoga and the practitioners of a Jain way of life that can be traced back to the *Acaranga* sutra, the earliest surviving Jaina texts (Chapple, 2008). A Jain's primary

focus is to do their best to avoid any intentional hurt to living things through *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *bramacharya* (the right use of sexual energy) and (*aparigraha*) non-possession (Chapple, 2008). I draw on these meanings for South Asian women in spaces rooted in the shamanic roots of yoga, ancient yoga traditions, and the retelling of the stories of yoga for meaning in contemporary culture. First, South Asian women were at the centre of the Harappa civilization (Clark, 2003). There is a strong possibility that Harappa was a nonviolent and matriarchal society (Dove, 2018). Second, an investigation into the role of South Asian women in egalitarian societies throughout the history of the yoga traditions may be empowering to South Asian diasporic women.

The teachings of the *sāmkhya* philosophy is a way to connect with the objects of experience and to assist realization that there is no separate self from what one is experiencing (Feuerstein, 2011). The yoga traditions embrace two core principles of the *sāmkhya* philosophy. The first is "*purusha* the intrinsic identity as self, pure consciousness and matter, and the second is *prakrti* the core psychophysical being, which includes mind, body, nature, and identity" (Whicher, 2002, p.195). The three *gunas* that represent conscious states include *sattvic* as goodness, *rajas* as associated with the power of action and *tamas,* which means inertia or inactivity (Feuerstein, 2011). Central to this learning is *sattva,* the first level of manifestation as its foundation (Feuerstein, 2011). We are conditioned to learn knowledge through the five senses (hearing, sight, touch, smell, and taste), and that is good, but not the whole picture (Feuerstein, 2011). The three *gunas* are the path in which one overcomes all affliction, but also where all affliction takes place. It is in this

way that the world becomes often known in the negative light of ignorance or ego, and that is not the real world. This is where there is not enough *sattva* (goodness) in the world, and the world cannot act in the light of *sattva*. Nature appears as the nature of the beings in the world, but the real world is nothing but the pure consciousness of being. This brings about integrity of life in all forms. Therefore, every living thing is given the honour of being that one being, and that is called self-realization. In order to realize that oneness, you have to know it within yourself, and the principal work is on your own *prakriti*. Then you can help others to work on their *prakriti* wherever they need that work to be done. This is central to a feminist-informed yoga because of the marginalization and oppression people face.

The teachings of *purusha* and *prakriti* as part of the *sāmkhya* philosophy, in particular, highlight the growing experience of *sattva* and the inner light of being/manifestation that can be healing (Feuerstein, 2011). This healing can be offered in marginalized and oppressed people. I want to liberate myself from the mistaken self-identity through the work of the mind. These mistaken identities are bestowed upon people which becomes internalized. For example, racism is something I have experienced but it is not something that defines me. The eight-limb path is vital in assisting our *prakrti* (nature) structure to do more *sattvic* (goodness) work. In other words, creating a correct relationship with the sense of otherness, so we no longer separate ourselves from what we experience (Feuerstein, 2011).

The sense of self needs the intellect to reflect back on who people are within an understanding of the nature of the *sattva* (goodness) (Feuerstein, 2011). Marginalization and oppression do not mean people have to escape

from the world, but instead, people have to get more in touch with the world. Meditation is not an escape from the world, it is withdrawing from the hold that *raja* and *tamas* have over our mind. (Feuerstein, 2011). For example, it is often thought that *rajas* and *tamas* are cloaked in fear, such as the fear of dying and death and our sense of self gets caught up in identifying in what it knows. Women, in particular, can be afraid of losing that which is known, and this becomes a state of affliction. Cultivating a deeper connection to *sattva* can help connect people to the deeper cosmic consciousness which brings self-awareness and deeper self-love (Feuerstein, 2011). bell hooks (1999) say "One of the best guides to how to be self-loving is to give ourselves the love we are often dreaming about receiving from others" (p. 24). This idea of love plays a large role in the vision I have for a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga.

Patanjali's yoga sutras, written in 400 CE, remains a popular book sold in stores all over the world (Feuerstein, 2011). Feuerstein (2011) believed that every student of yoga should read and study the yoga sutras of *Patanjali*, as they are essential to broadening the meaning of yoga beyond that of a physical exercise. *Patanjali's* second yoga *sutra* 1.2 c*itta* (consciousness) *vritti* (fluctuations) *nirodha* (quieting of) the mind, are a central definition of yoga (Feuerstein, 2011). However, I wonder what kinds of *nirodha* (quieting) people are searching for in the contemporary yoga world that excludes our minds, bodies, and spirits from its spaces. Mind-body and spiritual healing can begin through the awakening of innate knowledge of yoga and yoga traditions. This higher intelligence can begin to heal the body (McCall, 2007).

Awakening to the knowledge of our bodies by understanding the science of yoga can be useful. The science of yoga can be defined as the mechanics of how life functions and how it may help improve health and wellbeing through the promotion of the growth of brain neurons and their connectors (Alter, 2004). In the Western world, many yoga practitioners do not know, nor care to comprehend, yoga as it was taught for thousands of years through yoga traditions. In contemporary culture, many people are drawn to celebrities such as Madonna, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Kate Hudson who are the symbols of modern posture yoga offering salvation through the selling of brand-named clothes and new-age diets (Chase, & Underwood, 2013). Their yoga products often perpetuate a false body ideal (Chase, & Underwood, 2013). However, my whole perception of life is beyond my physical existence, and I cannot be whole if I do not consider my mind and spirit in healing from trauma and oppression. Finally, in order to live more fully, I need to take care of my mind-body-spirit. This will include learning to *nirohda* (quiet) the mind from the triggers based on my lived experiences with many oppressions, such as racism and xenophobia in Canadian society.

Feminist-informed yoga is situated within the eight limbs of yoga but begins with the specific limb of *pranayama* (breathing), the fourth limb of the eightfold path. *Pranayama* comes “from *prana*- and -*yama*, ‘life/breath extension’, breath control consisting of conscious *puraka* (inhalation), *kumbhaka* (retention) and *recaka* (exhalation)” (Feuerstein, 1998, p.21). At an advanced state, breath *kumbhaka* (retention) occurs spontaneously for longer periods of time (Feuerstein, 1996). In yoga, breath control equals mental control (Friedland, 2009). It is through the proper regulation of the life force

that the yogi cannot only influence the nervous system but bodily functioning in general (Friedland, 2009, para 2). Breath control “helps to gain access to the subtle dimensions of existence by transcending the brain-dependent activities of the mind” (Feuerstein, 1996, p. 21). Many people who practice posture yoga do not understand that breath is one of the most important relationships to unite the mind, body, and spirit. What is our relationship with the breath? On the deepest level, I see our relationship with breath as cosmic in that we are in a relationship-building exercise with the deeper subatomic particles of the universe with which we are connected. On a more superficial level, *pranayama* (breath) is situated with building a deeper relationship through breath with the trees, plants, rocks, and soil. To understand breath control, I realize that the body is merely the outermost level or layer of the multidimensional structure that constitutes a human being. Overarching these multiple structures is how we can bring about a union of our mind, body, and spirit for greater cosmic consciousness while also awakening a feminist consciousness in a context of a patriarchy.

In this next section, I draw on *guru* consciousness as part of the theoretical foundation of the meaning of feminist-informed yoga for me. *Guru* consciousness could mean that marginalized or oppressed groups come together to practice yoga to awaken their minds, so they are more conscious or aware of their lived experiences. *Guru* means ‘*heavy*’ with authority, and in the yoga traditions, a guru is known as the dispeller of ignorance (Feuerstein, 1984). *Guru* consciousness means that the yogi embraces the spiritual transformation that happens through a yoga practice (Feuerstein, 2004). In modern posture yoga culture, *guru* consciousness is seen as a direct threat to

personal freedom and the psychological integrity of the individual (Feuerstein, 1984). The Western appropriation of yoga is rooted in this type of mindset because of the commodification of yoga. I argue that people use the word 'yoga' to sell their bodies, minds, and commercial brands, which is, in fact, opposite of the true meaning of yoga as 'union'. This selling of yoga is an anti-intellectual shift away from yoga and yoga traditions. This also the reason why I present the idea that *guru* consciousness is necessary and relevant today. In a consumer-based culture where material wealth maintains limited consciousness, *guru* consciousness offers yogis increased choices compared to the rigid working of the *guru* traditions in ancient India. Many modern yoga teachers focus only on the level of conditions. These conditions include internal messages about the way a yogi should look and the specific rules they follow when they practice yoga. The word yoga can be used in any way, but I ask people to consider who they are as an entire person, not just a physical body. This is not stupidity or surrender, but it is about becoming more enlightened in your own true intelligence. This does not depend on another person and, especially, not the teacher. This is because a good teacher will never cultivate an over-dependence by their students. Therefore, I argue that breaking free from within should be the goal, and the yoga teacher rooted in the idea of *guru* consciousness could assist.

Using a feminist lens, I consider the importance of *guru* traditions from India and brought to other parts of the world. Historically, the purpose of the *guru* traditions was not to create disciples but to awaken intelligence (Feuerstein, 2012). The *guru* traditions were seen as the apex of authority, but it was more important to have a respectful relationship between teacher and

student. In ancient India, the *guru* was given wide acclaim because they took traditional knowledge and were able to communicate and relieve people of the burden of renunciation (Feuerstein, 2012). The *guru* is based on the profound depths of the self; they are enlightened and liberated. The *guru* traditions of India existed to bring the awakening of the self, and in India, the ashrams were created for the purpose of creating the right atmosphere. I see that there is no reason that a yoga community cannot become enriched through self-realization and that the world can become more engaged in the self. There needs to be a great maturity in the yoga community as well. Currently this great maturity does not exist.

In the West, yoga studios and teacher training programs offer few opportunities for teacher-student interactions to develop a deep level of mutual relationships, yet they often use language that borrows from *guru* traditions, in particular, *guru* consciousness. Instead, there are reports of manipulation (Singleton & Goldberg, 2013), abuse of power (Suarez, 2018), violence (Remiski, 2018), ego (Hamilton, 2012; Palmer, 2018; Singleton & Goldberg, 2013) in yoga spaces.

Upholding *guru* consciousness alone does not absolutely ensure people's safety or potential benefits, but it does warrant further investigation to understand the development of intelligence of higher thinking. Dedication to this ideal does not allow pliability to adjust to the needs of the times and the circumstances in which we all live, both as individuals and as a society. I think that *guru* consciousness needs to be further examined in the development of a theory about feminist-informed yoga. In this world, we need more love and people with a desire to revolutionize our broken social systems and to serve

humanity. I think we are living in a time where everyone, rather than a select few, need access to the wisdom that resides in yoga and yoga traditions. In addition, I think humanity is in a time, space, and place that allows for increased connections and deeper relationships unrestrained by geographical locations, and we need to open space for more collaborative models of spiritual transformation.

Yoga helps us align with the source which is the cosmic consciousness. Through my autoethnographical writing, I have come to believe that at its deepest level, I want people to understand that the whole world is yoga and is practising yoga every day. What I mean is that we all come from the one source connected to a cosmic consciousness but each individual needs to connect with their own consciousness to align with the source such as with *purusha* or pure consciousness. Devdutt Pattanaik (2018), a mythologist and author, states that “Indian thought has always celebrated imagination, which is *Mana* (instinct or desire), so we are called *Manava*, (animals who can imagine). Yoga enables our imagination to celebrate and understand nature in her totality” (p. 90). However, for many people to locate deeper consciousness they need to address racism, understand privilege, class, gender, religion and discrimination. Yoga has the power to bring people together; it has the power to enable creativity, and it does not belong to anybody. However, there is a lot of room for the inflated ego in yoga since people can be carried away with the power created through its practice; people then get carried away with their ego sense of self instead of discovering their true self. For example, “the ego is unlikely to be healthy, it says, unless it is disciplined. We need to disengage the ego from its tendency

to identify with outward appearances by unveiling a more meaningful identity within" (Sovik, 2002, para 2).

I am skeptical of modern-day yoga teachers' awareness of feminist or cultural concerns in yoga spaces, in particular exclusion based on race and gender. The modern posture yoga in contemporary Canadian culture has become detached from the rich yoga traditions as some modern yoga pass on forms of movement rather than knowledge. This claim can be supported through the hyperfocus of yoga teacher training on the body. According to Yoga Alliance, "One direct consequence of the yoga awakening across the world is that yoga has become synonymous with *asanas* or yoga poses," (para 2) which is only one of the many aspects of yoga practice. Modern yoga teachers are not yoga teachers at all because they do not follow any system that leads to sophisticated intelligence (Yogesh, 2012). Modern yoga historian DeMichaels (2008) describes the present time period of modern yoga as acculturation. This is defined as when the minority culture (India) is fully absorbed into the majority culture (British) (DeMichaels, 2008). While, Andrea Jain (2004) explains that

> it turns out that the frequency with which people encounter yoga today has not translated into an absence of protest against it. In other words, many think these modern yogis do, in fact, have it all wrong. A growing movement courts fear and suspicion of yoga in its popularized forms, arguing that people have been duped into thinking that yoga is simply a product for enhancing well-being (p. 1).

However, when 'Western' yoga teachers train other practitioners to relate to yoga only on a physical level, without exploring the history, roots, complexity, and philosophy, they are perpetuating the re-colonization of yoga by diluting its true depth and meaning.

In addition, countless modern posture yoga teachers are full of ego (Frizzel, 2018) and purposefully evade a spiritual path as though there is something wrong with acknowledging that the yogic path has a spiritual meaning (Brown, 2018). In contrast, my family learned yoga through teachings and self-study of a Jain way of life and this manifested in everything we did, the way we communicated, and the way we shared life. We understood that this is because yoga is not an exercise; it is an ancient way of life, the eight limbs, *Patanjali's* sutra 1.2, and approach to conscious living. In contrast, many modern yoga teachers are misguiding individuals with their hyperfocus of yoga as merely bodily exercise. In fact, many modern posture yoga teachers are using the noble term of yoga to peddle material goods.

Has the modern posture yoga movement, with its sole focus on the body simply become a practice of ignorant gymnastics that contributes to the larger body dysmorphic culture? In a Western culture that perpetuates the desire for a perfect appearance, a fit body has become synonymous with success (Corazza, 2019). People with food and body image issues typically have poor self-awareness, which describes the sense they have of their bodies (Kyrölä & Harjunen, 2017). The modern posture yoga movement's hyper-focus on the body does not leave space for experiences of the self beyond the physical appearance. As Carla Rice (2013) notes, "consumer culture depends on the continual creation and proliferation of female 'defects' and body dysmorphic culture thrives in making women feel bad about their bodies while pumping us with our sense of choice, freedom, and agency and then offering healing through the purchase of beauty and consumer goods" (p. 405). For example, the rise of yogis' postings on social media, such as

Instagram, has made yoga more competitive and hyper-focused on the physical body, which can be harmful (Vukas, 2017). I want people to let go of this negative attachment to the body, in particular body dysmorphia, through a more body positive approaches (Body Positive Yoga, 2018). We need to allow a space to feel safe by making yoga a non-competitive environment. This approach challenges the capitalist culture that makes us believe happiness is obtained through external achievements.

4.4 'Feminism' and Feminist-Informed Yoga

In the second part of my response to research question one, I draw on my lived experiences as a committed feminist activist. I also draw on feminist intersectional perspectives of yoga, feminist perspectives of trauma and addictions, and the meaning of marginalized motherhood, with an emphasis on specific populations. I bring to light some of the essential feminist issues for a feminist-informed yoga. In particular, I use my perspective as a South Asian woman of the Indian diaspora born in a mid-sized Canadian city to situate my research. I explore the contributions by the pool of critical academic voices on feminism and yoga as relevant to me as I developed a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga in contemporary Canadian culture.

In perhaps no other space beside the yoga space is the Indian woman's body hated more. I am suggesting that South Asian women are not given the same privileges as white women in yoga spaces. I have often felt mocked by white women who both teach and participate in yoga spaces in the mid-sized Canadian city of my birth. For example, their sense of entitlement over the ownership of yoga as a practice, along with its clothes, music, and lifestyle as

being distinct and separate from Indian women's traditional clothes, music, and lifestyle appears rooted in a deep hatred. This hatred seems to be rooted in the hatred of South Asian bodies in white women's yoga spaces. White women who teach and practice yoga appear to believe that modern yoga practice is completely different from the yoga traditions taught to Canadian South Asian women, such as myself, as our way of life. I challenge white women in yoga spaces about why they are so resistant to learn about Canadian South Asian women's ancestral roots of yoga.

Through colonial discourses, South Asian women have been both sexualized and racialized (Aujla, 2000). South Asian women have a wide range of stereotypes such as "oppressed, subservient, tradition-bound, seductive, exotic, objects of desire, undesirable, overly fertile, and oily-haired" (Aujla, 2000, p. 45). South Asians in general are "stereotyped around the world in ways that are dehumanizing, and in some cases, it can lead to depression and mental health issues" (Rahman and Pollock, 2004, p. 130). However, for white women who practice yoga, yoga is seen as the apex of their creativity, movement, and peace in contemporary culture (Gandhi & Wolff, 2017). I ask why white women are adamant about creating spaces that use South Asian women's knowledge leading to their misrepresentation and exclusion (Gandhi and Wolff, 2017). Whiteness, "like other racial categories is socially constructed and actively maintained through social boundaries" (Daniels, 2016, p. 43). To speak up against neocolonialism in modern posture yoga speaks against the social order because there is a large risk of causing unhappiness and possibly anger.

Narayan (2000), a feminist philosopher, contends that there is a need to address the "'hegemonic-gender essentialist analysis of South Asian women in Canadian culture" (p. 265). For example, the mimicking of colonialist ideas about binary cultural dissimilarity between Western and non-Western cultures is detrimental to South Asian women and in particular, to those that are diasporic. The lived experiences of South Asian mothers, daughters, aunties, wives, and women, is as humans who are born as yogis and many of whom learn about the yoga tradition as their cultural identity. In addition, yoga and the yoga traditions maintain and sustain their South Asian diasporic identities in contemporary Canadian culture.

In Canada, there is a wide variety among South Asian people. As a second-generation Canadian South Asian whose parents were refugees from Uganda, there is a unique history to my existence. Some second-generation South Asian mothers have been stereotyped and face domestic violence. Many South Asian mothers provide unpaid household labour and caregiving to shelter their own families. This caregiving occurs within the context of isolation due to racism and sexism. This is often experienced in the wider Canadian context. Many South Asian women share experiences with each other of racism in Canada. These experiences as South Asian women limit their opportunities to thrive or survive. For example, my mother took a local yoga teacher training and she has a deep understanding of yoga and the yoga traditions. She ended up teaching the yoga teacher about the yoga traditions, but her teacher had a deep ego that prevented the yoga teacher from joining as partners with my mother and respecting the knowledge that many Eastern South Asian women carry and are able to articulate. These

encounters can silence South Asian women's voices, force exclusion, and create and perpetuate trauma and addictions. Society needs to offer more respect for South Asian women to make yoga a tool for inclusion and healing trauma and addictions.

Feminist intersectional perspectives on yoga have helped me situate myself in the context of this autoethnography. They have offered me insights into a wide range of marginalized voices on the lived experiences on yoga. Most intersectional theoretical work on yoga centres the body as a site of resistance. These emerging "feminist interdisciplinary voices of yoga link feminist theories, critical perspectives on yoga while situating healing from trauma, as a social justice issue" (Berila, 2016, p. 1). For decades, feminists have focused on the body (Berila, 2016). This focus has helped scholars to understand how "bodies are inscribed with oppression in different ways" (Berila, 2016, p. 5). Marginalized and oppressed populations are often 'triggered' when practicing yoga in various spaces and places. Berila (2016) explains that "since oppression creates deep trauma, it only makes sense that disrupting oppression and healing from it will require more than political and intellectual processes; it will also require embodied ones" (p. 6).

In North America, yoga is a $27-billion-dollar industry, and the cost of attending yoga classes remains prohibitive to many low to middle-income populations. Gandhi and Wolff (2017) advocate for offering a free, donation, and low cost or grant-funded yoga classes that could decrease financial barriers to yoga. However, the highly popularized 'mainstream yoga' within North America, is far removed from the practice of *raja* yoga or of *Patanjali's* yoga sutras, which Sri Vivekananda envisioned when he presented on the

topic of yoga at the Chicago Parliament of Religion in 1893 and inspired an interest in yoga in North America. Sri Vivekananda arrived in the United States to build a yoga common, hoping to fuel social development back home in India and around the world. Brammer (2010) writes that “despite his intellectual influence, there remains a significant gap between what was interpreted and communicated through *raja* yoga and what appeared on the international scene some sixty plus years later as the modern posture yoga movement*”* (p. 9). Enoch Page (2016) explains that Vivekananda contended with the whitewashing narratives of colonized America. Vivekananda himself discounted the kind of hatha yoga exercises which modern posture yoga is best known as being ineffective because they “cannot be learned in a day, and after all, do not lead to much spiritual growth” (Brammer, 2010, p. 30). Brammer (2010) further explains his aversion for physical forms of yoga in the absence of a spiritual dimension “by making a precise, strong distinction between ‘*mere physical exercise’* and the ‘*spiritual contemplation*’ he outlined in *raja* yoga*”* (p. 30).

Modern yoga scholars trace Vivekananda’s intellectual posturing back to the image of the yoga practitioner at the end of the 19th century. However, these images of the yoga practioners are based on an Orientalist mindset such as that of “Mark Singleton and other European observers who viewed Indian yogis as naked, dirty men who performed bizarre tricks with their bodies in the public square*”* (Brammer, 2010). Author Elizabeth DeMichaels (2008), wrote a book called “*A History of Modern Yoga,”* that traces the roots of modern yoga and identified separate time periods in the development of the recent history of yoga. However, even her cataloguing lacks details when it

approaches the past twenty years of yoga development. She identifies several time periods as relevant that include popularization, consolidation, and finally, acculturation from the early 1990s onwards. DeMichaels (2008) agrees that during the current period (1980's till today) yoga is being acculturated. Acculturation of yoga has become a standard fixture within the context of physical culture and lifestyle adherents in the West. In addition, there remains resistance to higher thinking offered through the yoga traditions that focus on the union of the mind-body-spirit.

Why does modern yoga exclude the poorest and most marginalized populations? For example, yoga is inaccessible because it is rooted in consumer culture and that presents the biggest barrier for the poor. Why are the feminist issues of trauma and addictions not central to modern-day yoga practice discourse? Trauma and addictions are still stigmatized and so are not openly talked about, but yoga teachers are also not trained to do this work. Why does the world remain unsafe for transgender and gender non-conforming people, and why all yoga spaces cannot be safe for all people? In contemporary culture, having discussions about experiences of racism and homophobia in yoga spaces breaks down barriers as part of a collective feminist movement that values our differences and complexities (hooks, 1999). Answering these questions requires consideration of politics, power, and the desire of those to control the population. These barriers are used as a tool of fear of not accepting others and waging a war with those marginalized and oppressed and have no political platform. Yoga practioners and studios should become more aware and centred on service to humanity, encompassing a vision of social justice for those most marginalized in a

community. This awareness and re-centering is not about control, power, and privilege and using yoga as a bait to maintain control over political power and of society. Safe spaces" refer to places created for individuals who feel marginalized to come together to communicate regarding their experiences with marginalization" (Amenabar, 2016, para 1). A feminist perspective on safe spaces could be incorporated to make yoga spaces safer for those impacted disproportionally by both race and gender discrimination such as South Asian diasporic women. Moreover, as Melucci (1999) explains that the concept of safe space emerged in the late twentieth century in the United States with the rise of the new social movements such as feminist, queer, and civil rights. These movements reprioritized the needs of safer spaces for these groups. In particular the need for safe spaces for healing for those who experience identity-based discrimination and violence (Melucci, 1989).

Modern yoga excludes the most marginalized and poorest populations. This is because most yoga is expensive and the exclusion of those who cannot afford to attend is problematic. Poverty in the mid-sized Canadian city of my birth disproportionately impacts some populations but especially women, Indigenous women, racialized women, members of the Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Intersex, and Asexual communities, and elderly women. As for trauma and addictions, modern yoga studios could be network sites for those needing healing from trauma and addictions. Yoga teachers should be trained to understand the supports and services for those suffering from trauma and addictions and poor mental health in their community. Creating safe spaces for transgender folks and gender

nonconforming peoples is also important because of the prevalence of violence and suicide in these marginalized populations.

Hobbs and Rice (2018) state “recent developments in gender, queer, and trans theory and activism across North America have placed the spotlight on gender and sexuality as socially created constructs” (p. XI). The intersectional feminist approaches on yoga draws on queer and transgender yoga that can help deal with bullying, harassment, suicide, addictions, and body image (Ballard & Kripalani, 2016). Specific actions that have created safer spaces include adding a ‘positive space’ sign, using gender-neutral pronouns and private change rooms (Park, 2014). For Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Intersex, and Asexual populations, yoga spaces offer stillness, solitude, and community where healing and wellness are not always possible given the violence community members often face in spaces and places across North America (Ballard & Kripalani, 2016). Further evidence is required to explore the yoga traditions in Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Intersex, and Asexual populations in Canadian culture. The applications of these findings to my theoretical approach of a feminist-informed yoga includes the importance of striving for a deeper engagement in the yoga traditions to address trauma and oppression. For example, *Patanjali’s sutra 1.2*, from the yoga traditions, offers a guide to yoga on how to calm the mind to think clearly and to quiet the chatter of the mind.

4.5 Feminist-Informed Yoga, Cultural Appropriation, Spiritual Materialism & Commodification

In this section, I discuss cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and commodification of yoga as part of a theoretical foundation of feminist-

informed yoga. Modern posture yoga is an inappropriate use of traditional Indian knowledge because South Asian women's spiritual traditions were removed and replaced under the experiences of colonialism (Van der Veer, 2001). The removal of spirituality in the modern posture yoga movement is also a form of cultural degradation that is harmful to South Asian Canadian women. This is because it fails to acknowledge the rich spiritual traditions of these women and removes a potentially positive and empowering cultural representation of them. Cultural appropriation of yoga disseminates harmful colonial ideas about 'Eastern' and 'Western' stereotypes that have resulted in the othering of my Indianness in contemporary Canadian yoga culture. Graham (2014) explains "that rather than disproving the authenticity of modern yoga, it is far more interesting to critically explore how and to what effect these often-problematic claims have been made over the past few decades" (p.85). Chakkarath (2010) points out that "Orientalist-mentality still resonates in modern yoga as Indians/Easterners are viewed as reminiscent of ancient European reports about exotic creatures that lived in the magical East and were significantly different from Westerners" (p. 18).

Narayan (2000) explains that at around 1600 BCE, the use of the term "Western" referred to Europe in distinction to the term Oriental. Narayan (2000) contends that Indian culture is a marker linked to the historical encounter of colonialism that arose in India. Narayan (2000) clarifies that markers are challenging because they pick out particular aspects of a culture. These markers are not harmless descriptions but are connected to more in-depth political projects that maintain the difference of one culture from another. In the present-day Canadian context, these markers are highlighted

by the current appropriation and exclusion of yoga in the mid-sized Canadian city of my birth. Orientalism continues to hurt South Asian women and how a shift in the cultural representation of South Asian women as yogis change this colonial mindset.

Cultural appropriation includes cultural degradation, preservation of cultural elements, “cultural exploitation as the deprivation of material advantage, and the failure to recognize sovereign claims” (Rogers, 2006, p. 487). Cultural degradation can have corrosive effects and is a form of appropriation because the appropriative conduct can erroneously depict the heritage from which it is drawn (Rogers, 2006). In addition, the preservation of cultural elements includes the protection against cultural exploitation of cultural objects. Symbols and practices as cultural presentations are best understood in their original context and should maintain priority on the integrity of marginalized cultures (Rogers, 2006). Also, I stress the importance of the preservation of cultural elements in a Jain way of life of the Indian-diaspora. For example, the Jain symbol with a hand contains the symbol for *ahimsa* (Figure 7). This type of Jain symbol should be protected because it represents the ultimate goal of Jainism. In addition, the protection of cultural symbols demonstrates respect for diasporic Jain women who practiced these traditions for generations in their own communities. For example, my mother was born in Kampala, Uganda where there was a large Jain population and they would all gather in the one Jain temple in the

community. Later, when my parents fled Uganda as refugees and settled in a mid-sized Canadian city where they had no temple and simultaneously lost their entire community.

Figure 7: Jain *ahimsa* (nonviolence) emblem (Chariwit, 1974)

The integrity of these marginalized cultures should be protected. The protection of cultural history and increased representation in yoga and the yoga traditions is important. The emergence of the modern posture yoga in the West has focused primarily on physical practice. However, it neglects to focus on the empowerment of South Asian women because of a deep-rooted overt and subtle racism towards the racialized peoples of India. This is why modern yoga scholars have made no mention of honouring South Asian women's heritage of those already living in Canada but also who identified as Jain but face discrimination based on their racialized identities. This lack of focus an South Asian women still exists today, in particular due to a lack of representation in popular Canadian culture. For example, Apu and his wife Manjula are infamous South Asian characters from the TV show *the Simpsons* (Tuncel & Rauscher, 2002). I remember as a child, watching the episode in which Manjula delivered many babies at one time and one of her babies was named Punam. I remember

everyone at school the next day, I know telling me that they had said my name on TV. These stereotypes are harmful. As explained below,

> Apu is married to Manjula in a wedding that has been arranged when both were children. Here, Western stereotypes about arranged marriages and dowry negotiations come into play. The marriage, however is a happy one, and the Nahasapeemapetilons become the parents of no less than eight children. This is not only a manifestation of the cliché of an extended immigrant family but also another dig at overpopulation in India and the alleged particular fertility of Indian women (Gottschlich, 2011, p. 279).

The concept of selective labelling is significant to the development of a theoretical foundation for feminist-informed yoga. Selective labelling "is the social power conveniently designated to certain changes in values and practices as consistent with cultural preservation and others as cultural loss or betrayal" (Narayan, 2000, p. 266). For example, selective labelling lets dominant groups such as modern yoga practitioners and researchers shift the values and practices within a culture. These changes appear consistent with the presentation of 'essential values' or 'core practices' of a culture such as those imposed during colonial periods. The selective labelling of South Asian yoga culture during Britain's colonization of India allowed for the depiction of these changes. For example, when the British colonized India through violence and rape, the selective labelling of cultural practices of yoga were labelled primitive while Christianity was also imposed. South Asian people were resilient and firm in their resistance to British colonization and today there remains a legacy of yoga traditions that need to be decolonized.

Another type of cultural appropriation is the "deprivation of material advantage", which means that cultural products have been exploited for financial gain either in the past or present-day cultures (Rogers, 2006). Fish (2006) explains that commercial transnational yoga is the practice of yoga

outside of India as a commercial exchange. Modern posture yoga is now a multibillion-dollar industry that has been the site of increasing formal regulation to gain greater credibility within the health and health care field (Seitz, 2010). However, South Asian immigrants and refugees to Canada do not seem to benefit from transnational commercial yoga, and a feminist-informed yoga asks why, since the practice rightfully belongs to them for thousands of years.

I draw attention to the broader health inequalities that affect South Asian women in Canada. For example, South Asian immigrants have higher odds of fair/poor self-rated health, diabetes, and hypertension than white immigrants (Veenstra & Patterson, 2016). These inequalities, along with the financial exploitation of the yoga traditions in contemporary Canadian culture, contribute to the significant structural issues that South Asians face, the highest visible minority population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011). Despite yoga's multibillion-dollar industry, there remains deep-rooted cultural exploitation of South Asian women's sacred knowledge and ways of life.

Another area of concern is cultural appropriation as exploitation. Cultural exploitation occurs within the "context of ownership, with remuneration when widespread appropriation of elements of traditional culture" (Rogers, 2006, p.474) and transforms its meaning into something completely different. In the Western legal system, "cultural exploitation is often called out by the traditional culture, but there remains a failure in the legal system to recognize sovereign claims" (Rogers, 2006, p.474). Traditional cultural knowledge should be honoured and recognized as a central part of South Asian women's

identity, in particular, the Indian-diaspora, in places such as Canada where cultural exploitation is rampant.

I seek to reconcile the issues of cultural appropriation. I believe that very few Western modern yoga practitioners actually go deeper to become rooted in their practice beyond that of just the physical body. Far fewer go on to explore the ancient yogic teachings. I suggest that modern yoga practitioners could do a better job in order to humbly honour and learn from the traditions they have had the privilege of accessing. This acknowledgement is important because it will ensure a more respectful and accountable cultural exchange to occur. In addition, this acknowledgement may have a profound healing effect on the practitioner. I want practitioners to develop a relationship with yoga that takes them to a more profound and transformative space of practice.

4.6 Feminist-Informed Yoga & Trauma

In this section, I draw on the meaning of feminist-informed yoga and trauma. In particular, I draw on my own lived experiences with intergenerational trauma. In addition, I seek justice for South Asian immigrant and refugee women who experience trauma due to racism and xenophobia in Canadian culture. For example, violence against South Asian women exists within a cultural context. When South Asian women leave the domain of their cultures such as their homes or temples, they experience racism and/or xenophobia in Canada (Tran, 2015). These racist attitudes towards South Asian women need to be decolonized. For example, my mother was a tour guide and travelled all over the world. When she demonstrated her intelligence, her clients made an argument to tell her that they knew better as

they wanted to put her down. For over thirty years, her clients were almost exclusively white and from rural Manitoba. They made her feel like a service provider but also because of her race and gender she was often discriminated against.

Several factors influence the role of oppression in the causation of trauma (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). Including the experiences of racism, homophobia, classism, and ableism as essential areas to consider in the causation of trauma (Berila, 2016). However, as mentioned earlier, most scientific work “does not effectively address the roles of oppression in creating trauma” (Berila, 2016, p. 7). Becky Thompsen (2017) contends that trauma theory is an extraordinary place to discover healing. There is a need for evidence-based research that links feminism, trauma, and healing. One approach would be to undertake evidence-based research to explore the potential links between yoga and its demonstrated physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health benefits. A trauma-informed yoga clarifies that trauma may result from physical violence or from challenging psychological and emotional understandings (Emerson & Hopper, 2012). The influence of trauma might be sudden and of significance in the slow destruction of a sense of self (Emerson & Hopper, 2012). People are often oblivious that they are feeling trauma until an extended period has passed, the damage from trauma can be silent (Emerson & Hopper, 2012). Emerson and Hopper (2012) draw on the theory of dissociation, which is related, although not identical, to the concept of repressed memory in their approach to trauma-informed yoga. For example, for some people the deeper the trauma, the more that person may dissociate and have no conscious memory of the traumatic event (Emerson &

Hopper, 2012). Only by finally remembering the repressed trauma can the patient move on to healing (Van der Kolk, 2003; Perry & Van der Kolk, 1989). An examination into the roles of oppression and marginalization in certain populations is essential to any healing approach in the development of a theoretical framework of a feminist-informed yoga. Sexism, homophobia, racism, classism, ethnocentrism, and ageism exist in society as well as in the mainstream yoga studios in contemporary culture. In particular, marginalized mothers carry trauma (e.g., intergenerational) and experience trauma as mothers within the context of being marginalized and oppressed.

4.7 Feminist-Informed Yoga & Addictions

Addiction is “any repeated behaviour, substance-related or not, in which a person feels compelled to persist, regardless of its negative impact on his life and the lives of others” (Maté, 2010, p. 85). Addictions remains a growing public health problem in contemporary culture (Sussman, Lisha, & Griffiths, 2011) as substance and behavioural addictions are often used to numb pain (Schnoll, & Weaver, 2003). Advancements in technology have left a void in many people’s lives and disconnected people from the natural world. A deeper understanding of addiction beyond medicine but also as a social justice issue is central for a healing approach for marginalized mothers. The ability of yoga to help people cope or heal from addictions makes it an essential area of further research (Posadzki, Choi, Lee, & Ernst, 2014). Gabor Maté (2010), an addictions medical doctor working in downtown Vancouver's East side, challenges the scientific perspective of addiction as a chronic, neurobiological disease. Maté (2010) says that addiction is a human problem that resides in people, not in the drugs or in the pharmaceutical capacity to

produce physical effects**.** The significant issue in addictions is not the quantity or even the frequency but the impact of the addiction (Maté, 2010). An "addict continues to use a drug even when evidence powerfully demonstrates the drug is doing significant harm to them and the people they love the most" (Maté, 2010, p. 85). Maté (2010) explains that if "users show patterns of preoccupation and compulsive use repeatedly overtime with relapse, addiction can be identified" (p. 85). Finally, Maté (2010) argues "that at the heart of addiction is an unhealthy dependency on the sense of unwholeness that disintegrates and destroys a habit and turns it into an addiction" (p. 86).

In this section, I consider the link between feminist-informed yoga and addictions. Addiction is defined by those with discursive authority, in power, such as doctors and government (officials and politicians) as a deficiency or a loss in spirit and strength (O'Malley, & Valverde, 2004). Medical and governmental control and regulation on aspects of addiction are limiting to society and should not be viewed by society as all-encompassing (Hart, 2017). I believe that all addictions should be viewed in a context in which there is a need for liberation that requires a change in consciousness. For example, freedom from the impact marginalization and oppression is a form of liberation. There is a link between marginalization, oppression, and addictions. For example, as a cisgender Jain woman of colour I have experienced the colonizing effects of racism within modern yoga studios. These modern spaces are full of cultural appropriation and overt racism towards South Asian women. These spaces have often triggered me to feel unsafe, unwelcome, and unwell. These feelings have contributed to increased stress. As my parents also experienced the stress of being refugees to

Canada, where my mother was also a teenage bride in an arranged marriage, I experienced the intergenerational trauma caused by my parents' stress. I believe that, in the future, the impact of global migration and displacement will lead to a need for healing spaces that directly address stress, addictions, and trauma for this population in Canada. This idea is significant in a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga.

Growing up and working as a public health researcher in Indigenous communities for several years, I witnessed the colonizing effects of governmental policies as tools used in the creation of systems that maintain and reinforce the marginalization and oppression of Indigenous people, in particular women. As a result of colonization, Indigenous peoples were forced to repress their understanding of culture and traditions and their connection with nature. Culture and traditions were also connected with nature in the ancient Harappa Valley civilization. The roots of feminist-informed yoga connect South Asian women back to the Harappa Valley civilization in which archaeological evidence such as figurines suggests that they may have been part of some sort of magic ritual or shamanistic performance. As Mahapatra, (2018) points out about the women of Harappa Valley civilization,

> the hairstyles, the ornaments, dressing clearly indicate the important prominence assigned to women at the time in what appeared to be a neatly egalitarian society of extreme interest is also the occurrence of specific naturalistic fondness and their priestess which suggest that the Indus people worshipped a goddess whose domain was the forest" (para 24).

The connection with nature in among both South Asian women and Indigenous women would be interesting to explore in the development of a feminist-informed yoga.

Both of these ancient cultures lived with a belief in a relationship with nature and the new values established in colonial educational systems left them disconnected from the roots of their culture. For some, addictions replaced the void (Maté, 2008). The difference is that some South Asian were given access to education, while many Indigenous women were placed in a residential school system reserve system and left in isolation. However, South Asian women were undervalued, because, for a long time, they could not get jobs in a white privileged culture such as universities. The white privilege culture stereotypes both groups of women are not worthy of being hired in a workplace even though they are qualified (Gray, 2019). For example, "Racialized women professors experience a rate of unemployment that is almost twice as high as for their non-racialized women colleagues, at 9.2% vs 4.9% in 2016" (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2018). While "racial discrimination may influence the life circumstances of racial minorities through multiple pathways, such as by determining one's residence, economic opportunities, stress, and experiences with health care" (Gee, 2011, p.115).

The foundation of a feminist approach to addictions draws on four critical perspectives in its development. First, addictions are best understood within their extensive social, political, economic, and historical backgrounds (Netherland, 2012). For example, some marginalized mothers with addictions have experienced the impact of colonization, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and state policies that focus on the apprehension of their child (Bennett & Blackstock, 2007). Healing the root causes of addiction may require the reintroduction of the cultural aspects their lives for marginalized Indigenous mothers. Second, addictive behaviours are associated with social

inequality based on race, class, gender, and sexuality (Netherland, 2012). For example, many marginalized mothers face discrimination in their daily lives. Offering yoga in spaces that are sanitary and safe can be helpful in the creation of community. This community building can create space for marginalized mothers to heal. Third, listening to the lived experiences of people who experience addictions is fundamental (Marcenko, Kemp, & Larson, 2000). For example, medical research on addictions has historically focused on the link between genetic risk and drug addiction but this approach often fails to acknowledge the lived experience of populations who may have experienced early childhood trauma (Nemeroff, 2004). Listening to the voices of marginalized mothers is essential to tailoring yoga classes for mothers. Fourth, research needs to imagine a better humane alternative drug policy that can combine approaches rather than shun problem drug users and better reduce drug-related harm (Netherland, 2012). While there is an increase in research in regard to the benefits of harm-reduction, there are still challenges (Poole et al., 2013). These challenges include the need for more government support of harm reduction centred programs for marginalized populations. Finally, healing from any type of addiction requires a deeper understanding of the root causes of addictions, such as poverty and/or racism.

Marginalized mothers are often portrayed as bad mothers if they use substances. For thousands of years, humans have been altering their states of consciousness. For some marginalized mothers, a feminist-informed yoga can be destigmatizing towards an addiction, such as the view that substance use ‘is bad,’ is significant. The human race has been using drugs and alcohol to relieve all sorts of suffering (Aboot & Chase, 2016, para. 1). In historical

contexts, ancient substances were used to connect with nature (Aboot & Chase, 2016). When I speak of addictions in the modern-day, the cause of many addictions are because of disconnection with nature and increased reliance on technology (Aboot & Chase, 2016, para. 1). To reconnect to nature means being more outside with the natural environment, the birds and trees, the flora and fauna. Today we use technology to communicate with family and friends and coordinate our daily task through devices. The use of technology to communicate has shifted the way we communicate and limited our connection to each other as human beings (Chaudhry, 2015). Human beings are moving towards dependence on artificial intelligence and completely ignoring the natural environment that connects them to their consciousness, which is very important for humans to connect for the body, mind, and spirit. I believe we are in a crisis of consciousness, which is an essential part of our humanity. We have lost our connection with nature and with our universal consciousness. There are two ways to centre a healing approach for addictions. First, early human cultures showed that they used substances from nature (e.g., soma) to hallucinate and connect to their higher consciousness (Abott & Chase, 2016). Second, for some people everything is in abundance and technology today offers an effortless lifestyle but our minds are living in a vacuum. For example, an understanding that addiction gives a temporary 'euphoria' but not a connection to our mind-body-spirit through nature. This is why it is important to be connected to nature. These two factors are important in the understanding of the development of a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga in contemporary culture.

4.8 Feminist-Informed Yoga & Shamanism

This section explores the link between feminist-informed yoga and shamanism because both alter human consciousness for the potential benefit of increased health and wellbeing. For millennia, shamanism has existed and is viewed as the original forbearer of all ecstatic religious behaviour (Winkleman, 2010). Historically the word ‘shaman’ was derived from the word ‘šaman’, which is taken from a Siberian, Indigenous group who used the term to refer to their spiritual practitioners of both genders (Znamenski, 2007). It is believed that altered states of consciousness are a universal ability of all humans that all humans have roots in shamanism, and it is merely unfortunate circumstances which have led people to lose or forget their shamanic ways with other emerging practices and dominating lifestyles (Winkleman, 2010). For example, the Jain practice of asceticism has striking parallels to shamanism. The relationship between altered states of consciousness to cultural and human psychobiology provides new approaches to feminist-informed yoga’s response to addictions. Growing up in the Jain traditions and correspondingly as a South Asian-diasporic woman, I followed the principle of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and focused on re-learning the value of our deep connection with animals. The Jain precept of *ahimsa* (non-violence) roots itself within the *sramanical* (the seeker) traditions of pre-6th century BCE India (Adhikari, 2009), a time in which humans had a deep respect for animals (Chapple, 2008; Samuel, 2008). In addition, in nearly all the traditions of India, there were shamans who specialized in healing and the cultivation of extraordinary power through their relationship with animals (Chapple, 2008). Christopher Chapple (2008) writes that animals were

regarded as holding extraordinary power that was harnessed through imitation in ancient *sramanical* traditions (BCE). The concept of the totem animal was significant among the Indigenous peoples and in the practices that imitate animals in movement and sounds (Chapple, 2008). Animal symbolism sheds light on the deeper meaning on the theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga.

There is a profound and unexplored healing potential of both yoga and shamanism within the context of decolonization. The practice of shamanism mainly involves communication and control of spirits by entering into altered state of consciousness (Revonsuo, Kallio, & Sikka, 2009). An altered state of consciousness is achieved within public space and is often ritualized by the addition of ceremony and music (Revonsuo, Kallio, & Sikka, 2009). The ritual component of shamanism guarantees social bonding and integration of the community across generations (Townsend, 2004; Winkleman, 2010).

Both yoga and shamanism offer a rich narrative and empowering discourse for marginalized women in contemporary Canadian culture. However, Mate (2008) argued that there is potential in the approach to bringing ayahuasca to marginalized mothers and others in downtown Vancouver as part of healing from trauma, in particular, local Indigenous peoples but also other populations such as marginalized women.

South Asian women could be re-centered in yoga and the yoga traditions while Indigenous peoples could be re-centered in the practice of shamanism. However, Indigenous peoples should not do something that may or may not be part of their traditional practices as it could be viewed as inappropriate or colonialist. Further to this I am curious about the relationship

between the two practices as yoga involves an inward journey of healing while shamanism involves an outer journey of healing. However, any further research in this relationship would require consultation with Indigenous peoples and communities. The act of neo-shamanism is a direct form of cultural appropriation (Cuthbert & Grossman, 1998). Neo-shamanism adopts and consumes the resources of Indigenous peoples, and treats Indigenous culture as a resource. I contend that neo-shamanism is both a form of cultural appropriation and domination through the process of assimilation (Cuthbert & Grossman, 1998). However, neo-shamanism denotes the combination of the ecological and spiritual knowledge(s) from Indigenous cultures into the modern lives of the broader non-Indigenous populations (Znamenski, 2007). Neo-shamanism is considered a contemporary spirituality of Western culture (Cuthbert & Grossman, 1998; Mulcock, 2001; Znamenski, 2007). It has been argued that neo-shamanism is a form of cultural appropriation (Blain, 2001). This is because there is a difference between shamanism and neo-shamanism. Neo-shamanism is based on commercialization and mass consumption and the colonial roots of racism embedded with the movement (Grounds & Revival, 2015). These arguments are similar to those I have made regarding modern posture yoga and shift the focus onto decolonization through the development of a feminist-informed yoga. Some contend that neo-shamanism is not a form of cultural appropriation because it is a universal ability which some people are merely re-discovering (Noll et al., 1985; Winkleman, 2010). I do not agree with this and I believe that neo-shamanism is cultural appropriation. This is because at the heart of the original practice of

shamanism are Indigenous peoples who have subsequently experienced colonization. Torres (2015) explains

> In many traditions, the power of a spiritual practice (whether shamanic or not) comes through the adherence to what was handed down, and the empowerment of practicing the same rituals the same way for many years. In some cases, only a well-trained individual after years of practice may even be allowed to lead a ceremony or a dance (para 2).

Neo-shamanism is appropriation because while colonization brutally punished Indigenous practices, non-Indigenous people could freely practice it. Neo-shamanism emerged in the sixties and seventies within both popular culture and Western academics (Lindquist, 1997). Subsequently, throughout the Western parts of the world, there has been an intense upsurge in the belief and practice of neo-shamanism (Znamenski, 2007).

Many non-Indigenous people do not view neo-shamanism as cultural appropriation but simply a rediscovering of humanity's ancient spiritual roots (Von Stuckrad, 2005). I argue that there needs to be recognition of how beliefs and practices are shaped by an individual's culture and history, in the context of cosmic consciousness and shamanic connections. I argue that there remains a need for increased recognition and respect for both the yoga traditions and shamanism in contemporary culture. The decolonization of yoga and shamanism may be avenues for potential improved health and wellbeing of marginalized and oppressed populations and might offer a rich narrative and empowering discourse. A decolonized shamanism could return some marginalized mothers to a connection back to their shamanic roots that have been lost. When marginalized populations re-establish link to their lost cultural values, this provides a psychological boost and offers the potential for healing.

Chapter Five: Feminist-Informed Yoga as a Healing Approach

In this chapter, I answer research question two, “What are some of the ways in which feminist-informed yoga can be applied as a healing approach to populations of marginalized mothers in a mid-sized Canadian city?” I explore some of the ways in which a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga is applicable as a healing approach for me in a mid-sized Canadian city. As I am a marginalized mother, I situate my own lived experiences as a single mother of colour in a mid-sized Canadian city. Marginalized mothers experience stress, trauma, addictions, isolation, abuse, and other contributing factors to ill health and poor well-being (Bunting, Webb, & Shannon, 2017). Marginalized mothers tend to be stigmatized and harmed under the binary discourse of motherhood that perpetuates a mother blaming ideology (Baskin & McPherson, 2014). Binary views of motherhood have often fueled the discourse of good mothers who are portrayed as white, middle-class, with Judeo-Christian values who always put their children's needs before their own (Baskin & McPherson, 2014). In Western society there are specific stereotypes about good and bad mothers.

Mothers are an important part of society and the concept of motherhood is a significant part of life. In society, bad mothers are portrayed as poor, Indigenous, immigrant, queer or racialized and not performing mothering duties that meet the requirements of their children (Baskin & McPherson, 2014). Mothers convey the cultural history of families and communities, along with social standards and customs (World Health Organization, 2005, para 2). In addition, “mother’s influence early behaviour and lifestyle patterns that not only determine their children's future, but shape

societies” (World Health Organization, 2005, para 2). Addressing the unmet needs of marginalized mothers is a significant public health challenge.

For me, being a marginalized mother is about seeking spaces for healing. I have over twenty years of experience of engagement with the modern posture movement yoga practice. In addition, I have never felt healed from the impact of the intergenerational trauma from being a second-generation Canadian with South Asian refugee parents in any modern yoga studio in the city of my birth. As a marginalized mother, becoming a yoga teacher and completing this dissertation on the topic of yoga has given me an opportunity to reflect deeply on my previous lived experiences in seeking healing spaces. For example, for years, I hid in yoga spaces in the city of my birth. I distinctly recall arriving at yoga, rolling out my mat, and making myself as small as possible. I would always close my eyes and hold my breath and pray that those stupid white yoga teachers did not call me out or touch my body. This went on for years. Today, I realize that this hiding also manifests for me in other spaces when confronting racism. This has made me understand that safe healing spaces are essential for marginalized mothers impacted by their racial-ethnic struggles, and in fact for all marginalized mothers. For marginalized mothers looking for help, as long as they can access that safe place it will establish a practice of coming to look for healing from trauma (i.e., mothers will attend). For example, for several years, I taught yoga for marginalized mothers that used substances. The mothers were participating in a program in which safe spaces were created through the recentering of traditional cultural teachings. This included the use of

medicines and engagement in cultural ceremonies, along with participating in my weekly yoga classes.

All of these, above experiences made me wonder if feminist-informed yoga could be a path towards healing for not only myself but for other marginalized mothers, in particular, through traditional ways of knowing, such as yoga and yoga traditions. The recentering of yoga and the yoga traditions can shift the understanding of healing away from a Western bio-medical lens. The word “healing comes from the Latin word *healan* that connects both the body and spiritual elements of the human being” (Weil, 1998, p.2). This “healing involves the temporary or permanent alleviation of symptoms, or it could mean reaching a state of wellbeing” (Weil, 1998, p. 2). Healing is a central concept in the theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga for marginalized mothers.

In this study, spiritual aspects from the yoga traditions may contribute to the World Health Organization's definition of health that includes the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual health and wellbeing (World Health Organization, 1946). What I mean by this is that yoga means the union, and the practice of feminist-informed yoga gives me an opportunity to make spiritual connections with my inner being to understand who I really am. When I make a connection to my spirituality it helps me to not only understand who I am but to achieve my goals. It also gives me a broader outlook of what creates challenges for me and others and brings me greater self-awareness and it helps me heal myself.

Marginalized mothers are situated at differing locations for healing. For example, some may be arriving at a point of acceptance about the need to

engage in health and wellbeing practices while others remain oblivious to their own healing needs. I argue that there is a need to redefine healing, as there is a need to shift more focus on the prevention of diseases (Casadevall & Pirofski, 1999). In particular, this is a shift in thinking away from a disease model of health that is rooted in an understanding of the psychological or stress-related causes of disease (Shonkoff, Boyce, & McEwen, 2009). Finally, “some healers imagine that all symptoms of a disease are the consequence of some powerful spiritual dimension and that each person must look at their own life and assess what it is that is making them unwell” (Yusuf, 2012, p. 24). In this study, the concept of healing became vital for me as a marginalized mother.

In this chapter, I will explore how a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga for marginalized mothers centres them in their racial-ethnic struggles. I will then explore feminist-informed yoga in the context of decolonization and how feminist-informed yoga and the yoga traditions can be healing for marginalized mothers. I will also examine how a theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga can be applied to recontextualize modern posture yoga for marginalized mothers. Then I will explore the deeper meaning of a theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga and link it with the concepts and theories of trauma, addictions, and shamanism for marginalized mothers.

5.1 Feminist-Informed Yoga and Marginalized Mothers

In this section, I delve deeper into the meaning of a theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga for me as a marginalized mother. I centre my own healing approach for marginalized mothers within my racial

and ethnic struggles. As a marginalized mother, I face specific racial and ethnic barriers that are important in the understanding of a feminist-informed yoga. For example, as a single mother of colour, I have become acutely aware of how race and racism influence my daughter's life. As a feminist mother, I have made teaching my daughter about racism, homophobia, sexism, and classism central along with living in a patriarchal society. This is often misunderstood amongst other parents who are privileged enough to act colour blind (Corradi, 2001). However, I also ask what kind of union do marginalized mothers want? Many racialized marginalized mothers face racism in society (Collins, 2016). Central to the definition of a healing approach is understanding that there are three dimensions that regulate marginalized mothers in the context of their racial-ethnic identity. First, marginalized mothers often struggle for control over their own bodies and to make choices about becoming mothers at all (Collins, 2016). For example, when my own mother was in labour with me at the General Hospital in the mid-sized Canadian city of my birth, the nurse asked my mother for her 'Indian Status card'. My mom had to explain that she was not a First Nations person. In addition, they left her in the hallway for 36 hours of early labour. My father could not be with her because my parents had no childcare to watch over my slightly older brother. Second, marginalized mothers sometimes struggle for maternal empowerment over the procedure of possession of their own children (Collins, 2016). For example, in Canada there still remains a disproportionate number of Indigenous Children compared to Non-Indigenous Children in the child welfare system (Blackstock, 2000). Third, "empowerment concerns include pervasive efforts by the dominant culture to control their

children's minds" (Collins, 2016. p. 45). In addition, marginalized mothers face other forms of discrimination, such as classism, stigma, and an assaulting state policy platform by the government that limits reproductive freedom (Bock, 2000). Mothers' unpaid work is also a challenge. If we paid mothers a salary for raising children, it would demonstrate that we value their work. For example, I have always thought that instead of calling it maternity leave it should be called something else, like mother-work. Also, the salary should be similar as to that paid to any other professional salary. The point is that a marginalized mother, as a new mother, is already vulnerable and receiving adequate pay for their work should be a basic human right. In addition, state policies of separation and the history of colonization for some marginalized mothers create a group of mothers requiring deep healing (Boyd, 2000). This is because of the enormous trauma that these poilcies inflect along with the complex history of colonization (Boyd, 2000). However, some marginalized mothers challenge normative constructions of motherhood within a patriarchal society (Wallbank, 2018). They do provide an alternative example of what it can mean to be a family as examples of social justice (Giles, 2014). These include single parent families, two-mother families, and stepfamilies as examples.

I centre my spiritual experiences as a South Asian marginalized mother within the yoga traditions (culture) and feminism (due to racism towards South Asian people). In particular, I situate myself as a South Asian mother of the second-generation Indian diaspora in Canada. I ask how I, as a second generation of the Indian-diaspora, translate my parents' spiritual practices. There is a relationship between the decline in the prevalence of the number of

nuclear families, and increase in the diversity of household arrangements (Nelson, 2016). What is the impact of this trend for a marginalized single mother of colour, like me? I assert that, in most cultures, the extended family model has always been dominant (Nelson, 2016). The challenge remains, due to the return and rise of traditional conservative values, to promote the idea of the traditional nuclear family (Connell & Pearse, 2014). I argue that all other non-nuclear families are seen as undermining parental authority (Irving & English, 2015). Over the past several decades, the feminist movement has led to the awakening of feminist consciousness about the limits of the heterosexual nuclear family (Stacey, 1983) and the unnecessary burden patriarchal society places on mothers throughout the world (Sayer, 2005). Understanding the discipline of life, which I learned through the Jain way of life, and how it sustained me, and kept me hardworking and persevering through school, was significant. The skeleton support I received from immediate family and that we shared with each other was transformative. For example, when I came home to a family there were members to help me. The declining prevalence of nuclear families has left many without extended support and trying to cope individually with life's daily tasks. As a marginalized mother daily life is harder, but falling back on the learned discipline and not deviating from my tasks helps me to give my family the best support I can give. The Jain way of life that I observed growing up sustained me, then much like learning more about the yoga traditions empowers me as a South Asian marginalized mother today.

Gender equality is central to the goals of the feminist movement. However, modern yoga researchers such Elizabeth DeMichaels and Mark

Singleton, presented the yoga traditions as a way to liberation that was understood to follow a male paradigm. This was sexist. More recently, several famous South Asian male yoga teachers have been accused of sexual misconduct by their former students in North America (Sarbacker, 2008). South Asian culture situates men without fault and respect for women is not taught (Abraham, 2000). In addition, some cultural and religious traditions remain patriarchal as they openly advocate that being born a woman precludes you from ultimate liberation, also known as *moksha* (liberation) (Sethi, 2012). Finally, forging a connection with a cosmic consciousness is available but the path towards its embodiment remains inaccessible for many. How would the understanding of universal cosmic consciousness be beneficial for marginalized mothers? For marginalized mothers, the understanding of oneness or what binds us all as human beings offers mental strength and wellbeing and offers healing. Yes, I believe that we as feminists should view cosmic consciousness as a social justice issue because, as feminists, we should not be defined by those things that oppress or marginalize us, such as race and gender. The concept of cosmic consciousness provide strength for some marginalized mothers in particular single mothers because they are raising their children alone. For example, throughout this autoethnography, I have mentioned the Harappa Valley civilization in the Indus Valley and the images of women mother goddesses who were at the centre of society. The Indus valley had the same understanding of the power of strength of women. This same woman is the image that inspires me today. This, alongside raising a child alone with a single mother consciousness, can connect me with the cosmic consciousness

displayed in the woman mother goddess statues from the Harappa Valley civilization that helps me connect to the cosmic consciousness.

5.2 Feminist-Informed Yoga, Marginalized Mothers & Decolonization

In this section, I explore the theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga in the context of decolonization for marginalized mothers. I offer a decolonized healing approach that requires a deeper union of mind-body-spirit using both cultural and feminist lenses. Decolonization of yoga is central to my vision of a feminist-informed yoga but it also includes the decolonization of motherhood. Pregnancy, birth, and motherhood are rooted in capitalism and patriarchal systems that seek to limit marginalized mothers' bodies and maintain their subordination (Colker, 1997). Decolonization of motherhood can begin in spaces such as one's own home or in community-led classes (Brown, Raynor & Lee, 2011). Reproduction is used as an instrument to regulate marginalized mothers' bodies (Bailey, 2011) and maintain subordination within society (West, 2008). Reproduction can include gestation, along with access to birth control and fertility treatments. Reproductive access can be limited by a mother's race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. This lack of access limits decisions some marginalized mothers face in control over their own bodies. For me, as a South Asian mother, I am the first generation in my family amongst the women not to have an arranged marriage and to also attend university. This is an important cultural shift because it shifts away from traditional gender roles that often leave women with only two choices, to become wives and mothers.

The current global system does not protect or allow space for some marginalized mothers to heal or to transition to their new roles as mothers

(World Health Organization, 1998). The concept of a nuclear family as limiting in the push back away from capitalism and patriarchy (Lehr, 1999). Many feminists argue that this family form is the foundation of capitalism and patriarchy. Also, centering the experiences of marginalized mothers becomes important for healing. I see the decolonization of motherhood as a process of unlearning beliefs about pregnancy, birth, and motherhood. Birth activist and midwife Ina May Gaskin (2010) writes “There is no other organ quite like the uterus. If men had such an organ, they would brag about it. So should we” (p. 1). One way to decolonize birth is to demedicalize childbirth in a process of understanding that women’s bodies during labour do not always need interventions and that normal birth allows for tremendous healing potential. Offering marginalized mothers space for alternative ways of raising a child, such as in chosen families and through engagement in community activism and social consciousness, can offer opportunities for healing (Edwards, 2000).

5.3 Feminist-Informed Yoga, Yoga, the Yoga Traditions, and Marginalized Mothers

In the next section, I draw upon my theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga, including the yoga traditions for the healing of marginalized mothers. I explore feminist-informed yoga as a healing approach that is rooted in a deeper understanding of critical to cosmic consciousness. The richness of the yoga traditions, in particular, ideas based on a Jain way of life, the *sāmkhya* philosophy, *Patanjali’s* yoga sutras, and the eight-limb path. can be used to address the complexity of developing a feminist approach to healing for marginalized mothers. These ideas all create space for marginalized mothers. An understanding of the yoga traditions offers a pathway towards a

calmness in my mind, especially when considered in the context of trauma and addictions in contemporary culture and if these yoga traditions could potentially provide healing for other marginalized mothers. For example, when teaching a feminist-informed yoga class in the community I often draw on the importance of *pranayama* (breathing). While, traditional ways of knowing through yoga for marginalized mothers may offer potential for deep healing.

Implementing the practice of yoga is a way to connect spirituality and consciousness by altering human consciousness for marginalized mothers. For example, connecting to the idea of universal consciousness through exploring the ideas of *purusha* and *prakrti* and how this theory from the yoga traditions comes together may bring health and wellbeing into yoga spaces for marginalized mothers. In the Western world, there is a medical prescription for every ailment to find a cure. However, there is no time given to heal but rather marginalized mothers are given Band-Aid solutions. Marginalized mothers need to be given spaces and time through yoga for the body to heal as it helps to heal the problem for the long term. Conversations about racism, patriarchy, and privilege are complicated and can often replicate unhealthy patterns of white supremacy (Jensen, 2005). Finally creating yoga spaces that are non-violent is central to the advancement of social justice concerns (Zimmerman, Pathikonda, Salgado & James, 2010).

I draw on many different components from the yoga traditions that offer a retelling of the story of yoga using the lens of culture and feminism. This process provides a unique opportunity to identify empowering perspectives. For example, sound can be an entry point into cosmic consciousness as it allows for a deeper connection with the origin of the universe. The origin of

the universe is based on sound, in particular, a primordial sound that is still resonating in some layer of our human's consciousness (Kumar et al., 2010). In the yoga traditions, '*om*', or '*aum*' are sacred sounds that are generally understood as the sound of the universe. '*Om'* is an all-encompassing essence of ultimate reality, and it unifies everything in the universe. The repetitive practice of the sound '*om'* is significant because it helps people feel a deeper connection to the universe**.** Nikic (2010) explains that "the healing with meditation with sound is possible. Sound vibrations during the meditation have a positive influence on the energetic and physical level. The effect of this practice is seen immediately after the practice" (p. 2).

A Jain way of life provides insights into a disciplined way of life. As a child, I was taught that our central way of life was different from the dominant Canadian culture, which is significant in a Judeo-Christian society. I was taught that animals have a soul and the decision to eat them was in opposition to the theory of *karma*. As mentioned previously, the Jain principle of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) is significant in my healing process from intergeneration trauma because it brings greater self-awareness in respect of all living beings and avoidance of violence towards others and themselves. Violence is often nuanced in a patriarchal culture and this can take on many forms beyond physical action (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni, & Rice, 2007), including emotional, psychological, and financial violence. *Ahimsa* should cultivate a deeper understanding of 'oneness' which means that to hurt another being is to hurt oneself. Healing must scrutinize all the ways in which violent action has been coded into our coping mechanisms (Gray, Buyukozturk, & Hill, 2017). Healing considers the objectives behind that

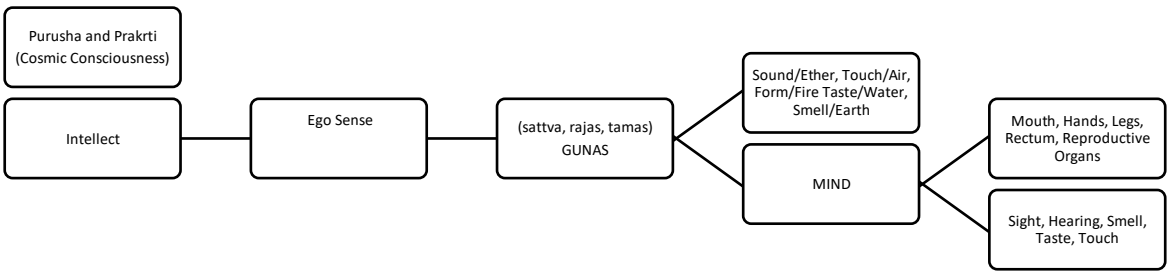
violence. When we lead with violence, there is no time to examine how much harm we do to ourselves when we lead with violence. Living with violence in any time or era is a cruel instinct and produces negative outcomes. Violence also leaves deep trauma during both war and peace times. However, peace is always the better solution in a feminist-informed yoga. *Ahimsa* means reflecting on another way of life. Another way of life for marginalized mothers must include non-violence.

The theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga encompasses the principals of a Jain way of life, but it also includes the broader yoga traditions such as *Patanjali's* yoga sutras which offer marginalized mothers an approach to yoga in daily life. In the Jain way of life, *samayika* is a meditative practice that brings equanimity and increases mindfulness. Meditation is a contemplative practice such as *samayika* in which the end result is an increase in mindfulness. Mindfulness is defined as "the quality or state of being conscious or aware of something" (Oxford Online, 2020). In a Jain way of life, it centres meditation on one way of life. The practice of yoga is a method to increase mindfulness. I am not saying that mindfulness is a panacea for all diseases and health but as part of a on feminist-informed yoga may offer healing. The practice of yoga itself is universally accepted, but feminist-informed yoga is more appropriate to South Asian women as trauma, mental health and/or addictions are important in the context of a healing approach. Also, mental health is often treated with a prescription. This is because it is profitable to big pharma to give a prescription of medication then it is to find the root cause of a marginalized mother's mental health problems. Moving beyond a binary view of mental health/prescription approach there is a

need to access alternative forms of healing. While there is growing amount of literature of alternative forms of healing there is not enough. It is comforting and healing for me as a South Asian marginalized mother to have my culture and spiritualty rather than taking a pill. Mental illness is an internal disorder, whereas feminist-informed yoga is a healing approach that has the potential to be a preventative approach. Feminist-informed yoga offers a way out for marginalized mothers from the complex relationship with medicine and pharmaceuticals, as they hold enormous power in society. It is difficult for marginalized mothers to find agency in a doctor's office or a pharmacy (Pollock, Newbold, Lafrenière, & Edge, 2012). A feminist-informed yoga offers South Asian mothers' freedom within themselves to achieve their health and wellbeing goals. Also, engagement with the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga offers healing that is free from substances such as pharmaceutical drugs. For marginalized mothers, the daily practice of meditation could simply be adapted for improved healing. While developing a daily meditation practice for marginalized mothers in which they can silently sit and become more aware of their trauma or addiction could also offer self-awareness. The practice of bringing equanimity and refraining from injuries such as through negative thoughts and behaviours can positively impact marginalized mothers. In a broader sense, refraining from negative thoughts allows for healing. Meditation is always premium and most people place benefit on meditation. Daily meditation benefits marginalized mothers as it helps them to connect to their inner consciousness and calms a mother's mind. For marginalized mothers it can also be self-healing from trauma that has never been given time and attention to heal. Also, when coming out of a

meditation practice the mind has often shifted. It is at this point, that a marginalized mother is able to better reason and draw a more positive thought. Finally, meditation can provide healing from a marginalized mother's trauma without bias or self-blame. Figure 8 is a flow chart of the *sāmkhya* philosophy which offers a description of the different levels of the mind.

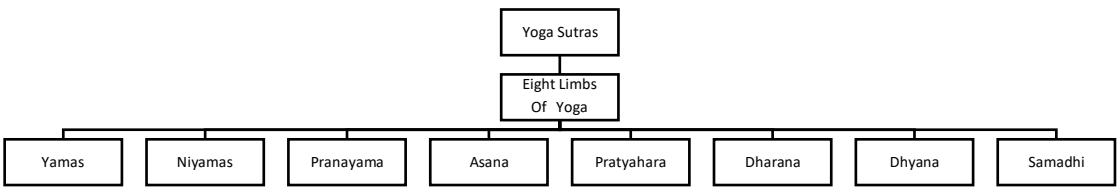
Figure 8: The *sāmkhya* philosophy description of the different levels of the mind.



The *sāmkhya* philosophy explains the three elements of *prakrti* (nature) which are *sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (excited), *tamas* (darkness) known collectively as the *gunas* (virtues). These are transformed into twenty-four elements of nature. In addition, *prakrti* (nature) is an inactive observer that is detached from *purusha* (pure consciousness of the universe). How can all of this be meaningful for marginalized mothers? By drawing on the knowledge of the *sāmkhya* philosophy, which is living a life of *sattva* (goodness), it helps to centre my healing. In a practical sense, this can begin with a simple reconnection with the five senses and elements that sustains us as living beings. Recognition of my own *ahamkara* (ego), which is a roadblock to *purusha* and *prakriti* is also essential for understanding the reasons for *asana*

(posture) practice. In addition, this road draws me closer to the cosmic *mamat* (intellect) but also centres my experiences in *Patanjali's sutra 1.2. citta vritti nirodha* that wants me to focus on a calm mind. This calming of the mind has many benefits towards reaching a greater union of *purusha* and *prakriti*. This kind of thinking also brings me closer to a more cosmic intellect. The *sāmkhya's* philosophy offers a description of the different levels of the mind. Developing my mind-body-spirit connection helps me to understand the obstacles of bringing greater stillness to my mind. How would developing an understanding of the *sāmkhya* philosophy be valuable for marginalized mothers who want to develop their mind-body-spirit connections? The *sāmkhya* philosophy can help marginalized mothers understand their own obstacles to achieving higher intellect, awareness, and stillness in their minds. Here is an opportunity for marginalized mothers to organize a discipline of life through the understanding *sāmkhya* philosophy where the *purusha* and *prakrti* help move past the *amhakra* (ego). Marginalized mothers could comprehend that there is a point beyond the *amhakra* (ego) and this lies in an understanding of universal consciousness where we are all bound together as one.

Figure 9: *Patanjali's* Eight Limb Path of Yoga



I draw from *Patanjali's* eight limb path (see Figure 9: *Patanjali's* Eight Limb Path of Yoga). As a marginalized mother, I am often struggling to maintain balance in my many roles. I subsequently draw from *Patanjali's* eight limb path, including *pranayama* (breath). Breath is just the material aspect of energy that is far more subtle and universal. It is believed that mastery of yogic breathing can lead to controlled breathing in one's own body, including during stressful events often experienced by marginalized mothers. Ancient forms of yogic breathing include a throat sound called *ujjayi* (victorious) that stimulate the energetic centre at the throat and has been associated with lowering the heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and includes a deeper more restful sleep. I wonder if other marginalized mothers could benefit from this practice of *ujjayi* (victorious) breathing. The *yamas* (ethics) and *niyamas* (discipline) offer a more accessible entry point into yoga for some marginalized mothers. When I do *ujjayi* breathing, it connects my mind to the breath. When I do the *asanas*, the nucleus of my body's cells connects my mind to the consciousness of the universe. As it progresses, the cells breath and the body mind and spirit make deep connection. In modern posture yoga, the body is central. Introducing or empowering marginalized mothers' access to sit in *asanas* or practice the *asanas* (posture) increases the body's steadiness. How could *asana* (posture) allow for the *citta* (consciousness) to become restored in the infinite? However, for me, as a marginalized mother, there is no time or space to rest in an *asana* (posture). The creation of more equitable childcare would demonstrate the value of mother's work and this would that create space and time for marginalized mothers to begin healing.

When marginalized mothers are recognized as caregivers and psychologically it boosts their confidence and rewards with extra benefits.

As a marginalized mother, I draw on *Patanjali's* eight limb path. In particular, the concept of *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses). *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses) is the inner journey of yoga that begins from the present moment to when the mind becomes steady (Frawley, 2010). It means withdrawal as sensory inhibition and can be an entry point into yoga in which the mind can cultivate steadiness (Feuerstein, 1996; Taneja, 2014). The other limbs of yoga are *dharana* (holding), *dhyana* (meditation), and *samadhi* (oneness) while also offering healing to marginalized mothers. *Dharana* (holding) and *dhyana* (meditation) are concepts of concentration of prolonged focusing of attention on a single mental object and leading to meditation. Patriarchy has created and maintained the division of labour where women do unpaid labour such as childcare (Rogers, 1996, p. 606). A feminist-informed yoga considers the impact of being overworked and exhausted as central in the lived experience of marginalized mothers. Importantly, "securing the mind through one-pointed focus, without wavering thoughts and without jumping from one topic to another" (Feuerstein, 2011, p. 21). This is central to healing. *Dhyana* (meditation) means meditative contemplation, which can provide a deepening of concentration while *samadhi* is the purest and steady-state of being (Feuerstein, 1996; Telles, Raghavendra, Naveen, Manjunath, Kumar, & Subramanya, 2013). While "*samadhi* is a spiritual state, when the mind is engrossed in whatever it is examining upon, that it loses the sense of its own identity" (Feuerstein, 2011, pg. 21). For marginalized mothers, *Patanjali's*

eight limb path offers many windows into a feminist-informed yoga practice beyond modern posture yoga's hyperfocus on the physical body.

5.4 'Feminism', Feminist-Informed Yoga, and Marginalized Mothers

In this section, I focus on the link between feminist-informed yoga and Indigenous mothering. For over fifteen years, I worked as a researcher with Indigenous peoples and communities in Canada in the area of health and wellness. I was initially drawn to the theory of Indigenous mothering within the subject of marginalized mothers, in particular, the 'ideology of mothering,' as Metis scholar Kim Anderson (2000) explains "there is no universal or essential experiences of Aboriginality, much less Aboriginal motherhood" (p. 70). However, in the mid-size Canadian city of my birth, Indigenous mothers have been silenced due to colonial practices of domination. As a South Asian mother raised in a Jain way of life, I am deeply connected to the concept of cosmic consciousness. Also, I have found inspiration and connection to the Indigenous theory of cosmology. Indigenous mothers have had a long and challenging colonial history that has robbed them of their personhood. While South Asian mothers of the Canadian diaspora have been "in the context of mother work, especially immigrant mothers, interested as not only nurturing and caring for their children but also to regulate living in a few countries while potentially facing a backlash" (Shagha, 2014, p. 413). Patricia Hill Collins (2007), asserts that women and mothers of colour must be understood,

> In the specific historical situations framed within interlocking structures of race, class, and gender where sons and daughters of white mothers have every opportunity and protection and coloured daughters and sons of racial-ethnic mothers know not their fate. Racial domination and economic exploitation profoundly shape the mothering context (p. 11).

The issues linking feminist-informed yoga and Indigenous mothering is an understanding of a deep spirituality.

How does this relate to consciousness and the yoga traditions or cosmic consciousness for marginalized mothers? Kim Anderson, as a Metis woman writes, “Spirituality has always played a significant role in our culture. Even now, many Native people do divorce spirituality from politics, business, education, health or social organization” (p. 72). Indigenous women’s roles in traditional spiritual practices, ceremonies, and beliefs demonstrate that Indigenous women held positions of esteem in their societies. For example, the concept of woman spirit as first truth was understood as Anderson (2000) explains, “when the creator called for the universal energies to come together in that sound, that vibration, which came forward where the universal energies created mother earth. It is also how we are connected” (p.71). The process of colonization impacted marginalized mothers. Sexism and racism have also rendered marginalized mothers’ bodies as worthless and eliminated many spiritual traditions as their own. As a South Asian marginalized mother reclaiming spiritual traditions through a feminist-informed yoga has helped me in my own healing through understanding a deeper connection to cosmic consciousness. In addition, Indigenous mothers are disproportionately affected by single motherhood. For example, one in three Indigenous mothers are single mothers, whereas one in seven non-Indigenous mothers are single mothers in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011). This disproportion makes Indigenous mothers an important target population in the development of a theoretical framework for a feminist-informed yoga. As a South Asian single mother, I am inspired by the writing of Indigenous feminist Lini Sunseri, (2010)

who explains that an alternative to patriarchal motherhood has always existed in Indigenous communities. Indigenous mothers have mothered in different ways from the dominant culture and that it is not only empowering for Indigenous women but for all women. As a South Asian mother, I have roles and responsibilities to maintain my cultural practices such as found in a Jain way of life and the broader yoga traditions. As Indigenous mothering scholar Marsden (2014) writes about grounding her children in experiences of spiritual-based living means, “to identify experiences of all-knowing sentient and loving light as the source of that reality related to it as the creator” (p. 30). As a South Asian marginalized mother, I draw on ideas from the yoga traditions that not only empower me but all other marginalized mothers. Finally, I ask the question, could recentering the gaze towards a deeper understanding of a universal consciousness amongst both Indigenous and South Asian marginalized contribute to healing in the context of the racism and xenophobia? Perhaps in a feminist-informed yoga class, Indigenous and South Asian mothers can share a yoga space centered around each other’s cultural and spiritual traditions. I have taught yoga classes with Indigenous mothers where I have introduced concepts from the yoga traditions such as *ahimsa*, in which the mothers were quite interested.

In this next section, I consider the theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga, the *guru* traditions, and the healing of marginalized mothers. The *guru* traditions offer potential healing for me in contemporary Canadian culture. Here, the central idea is that knowledge of the yoga traditions is passed down from teacher to student in yoga spaces. In particular, I draw on the concept of *guru* consciousness in healing for marginalized mothers. The

purpose of drawing on *guru* consciousness is to help me discover an awareness of my own lived experiences in a patriarchal society impacted by racism, sexism, and other issues but also including the impact of trauma and addictions. *Guru* consciousness brings me a deeper understanding of how yoga is connected to healing through deepening my relationship with *prakrti* (nature). I argue that modern-day yoga teachers are often anti-intellectual. For example, many yoga teachers are inept at breaking down the fundamental ideas about what yoga is or how the body-mind work together through regular *asana* (posture) practice. As Mark Singleton (2018) explains,

> There was little doubt in my mind that many yoga practitioners today are the inheritors of the spiritual gymnastics traditions of their great-grandparents far more than they are of medieval hatha yoga from India. And those two contexts were very, very different. It isn't that the postures of modern yoga derive from Western gymnastics - although this can sometimes be the case (Singleton, 2018).

In addition, many yoga teachers advocate for the benefits of yoga, but they cannot pinpoint what it is that they are doing and how that may connect to any useful tools for living a balanced life (Landman, 2016). Also,

> In these times in the world right now, it does yoga a disservice to teach its philosophy without recognizing the cultural context it was born in and what that means for modern practitioners. Yoga has a colonial history and, through massive popularity growth recently, it has subsequently excluded marginalized communities and certain body types (Johnson, 2019).

I am critical about the dramatic increase in the number of ‘certified’ yoga teachers in contemporary culture. I am critical because I wonder if these ‘certificates’ are simply just further additions to the capitalist wheel that drives the yoga industry. Also, within these ‘certificate’ programs I believe there is a lack of standardization and training to ensure that the regulation of a profession exists, which can be problematic. In addition, in yoga, there is a lot

of space for an inflated ego and commercialization, which makes it less accessible to people. For example, in my yoga teacher training I found that my teacher failed to incorporate the yoga traditions because the teacher wasn't well versed about yoga but her ego was going to keep her in the position of power. The solution that I am presenting is an increase in the cultural representation of more South Asian yogis who carry the yoga traditions as part of their ancestral history and provide a deeper intellect to the modern yoga posture movement.

In this next section I consider the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga, the modern posture yoga movement, and its potential healing for marginalized mothers. In particular, the deeper role of the *ahamkara* (ego) in modern posture yoga, along with how to overcome it. Through my autoethnographic writing, I have come to understand and recognize the tremendous power of yoga while feminism has helped me to recognize the role of power and patriarchy as central in my life. Moreover, as women, we have been encouraged to distrust that power which rises from our most in-depth and non-rational knowledge (Lorde, 1993). The distrust of our own power continues to hurt marginalized mothers. I believe that yoga has the power to bring people together and inspire creativity. However, as previously mentioned, one of the most significant problems in yoga is an inflated *ahamkara* (ego). This is because people become ignorant of their true self and get caught up with their ego-identity through yoga (Rosén & Nordquist, 1980). I advocate that we need to reroute yoga in the intellect of the yoga traditions, whereas a modern posture yoga class is simply rooted in the mechanisms of the physical body. Therefore, looking for a safe healing space

does not include modern yoga studios. In fact, I now walk away from these ego-driven yoga teachers and classes feeling disembodied or, in other words, dissociated from my own body. Rooting yoga in a more profound intellect and awareness about systemic forces affecting our lived experiences, such as racism, assists me to develop yoga classes in which the instructor is committed to my overall mind-body-and spiritual growth. Finally, I shift the focus away from the commodification of yoga through consumption of items such as fancy yoga pants and recentering its true meaning as ‘union’ is important for me as a marginalized mother. These approaches offer healing.

5.5 Feminist-Informed Yoga, Cultural Appropriation, Spiritual Materialism, and Commodification

This section draws on the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga and intersectional critiques of a modern posture yoga practice that are relevant to my own healing. There are many barriers preventing an increase in the number of safe spaces for the practice of yoga for me as a racialized-ethnic marginalized mother. In contemporary culture, people of colour should advocate for safer spaces to practice yoga (Berila, Klein, & Jackson, 2016; Kaushik-Brown, 2016). As a marginalized single mother of colour, I am often ‘othered’ due to racism, and this is felt as a lack of safe spaces for me to practice yoga. As a marginalized mother, I want to heal from my own intergenerational trauma and addictions, such as when I was younger, there were certain foods to which I believe I was addicted. I grew up in a home with a practice of cooking traditional foods, which often involved me eating them. This was a normal for many people in our community. Today, I have learned more healthy eating patterns that are more balanced but also rooted in my cultural identity. Breaking these unhealthy eating patterns has taken me 40

years. Different addictions have emerged through my relationship with my cell phone. Today, as a marginalized mother, I am addicted to my cellphone. I am not really sure how this happened, but I am constantly told by my seven-year-old daughter to get off my phone and spend one-on-one time with her. However, I have no safe yoga spaces that would offer me healing from either my experiences of intergenerational trauma or my addiction to my cell phone. By the same idea, feminist activists have long advocated for the creation of safer spaces, in particular, for women (Harris, 2005) and for the need for women to practice self-care (Andrist, 1997). The foundation of a feminist approach to addictions offers insights into healing because it roots addiction to social justice issues. I have the lived experiences with food addiction as a child. This addiction was rooted in a young age where I was always forced to drink milk and eat traditional foods that I did not like. As I got older, my family's diet changed to more unhealthy Western food that provided me with great comfort. As a marginalized mother of a toddler, I now see the impact of growing up in a home with a constant obsession with eating, cooking, and feeding children. Becoming more mindful of this addiction and learning to cook and engage in healthy cooking has helped me to understand the unlearning of my addiction to unhealthy foods and unhealthy patterns of eating.

I argue that racism is often central to the othering of me as a South Asian woman in modern yoga and this makes it hard for me to attend yoga classes. In 2015, a recent backlash against yoga directed towards people of colour was met by a public outcry. A popular yoga class was cancelled at the University of Ottawa due to concerns around cultural appropriation that

resulted in a global media frenzy centred on the concerns of one white yoga teacher feeling excluded (Kaushik-Brown, 2016). Kaushik-Brown (2016) writes “when whiteness absorbs yoga for its own mythology of supremacy. The ensuing propertization is overwhelmingly characterized by exclusion and inappropriate use, which in turn causes harm in sites that could have been healing” (p. 81). The University of Ottawa yoga class was reinstated, but by a South Asian teacher, who, as Kaushik-Brown (2016) explains, offered “embodied methods of healing [techniques] that can help oppressed people heal from the lethal effects of racism, colonization, and appropriation-based subjugation” (p. 84). The continued lack of cultural representations of South Asian women continues to impact the perception of the meaning of yoga and the yoga traditions in contemporary culture.

The ancient yoga traditions are a source of inspiration for me as a marginalized mother because they offer depictions of yogis in statues from the ancient Harappa civilization (3900 BCE) and statues of goddesses that depict the possibility to matriarchal society. As a South Asian marginalized mother, I found these ancient statues empowering because they allowed me to see evidence of the yoga traditions. In addition, it has been speculated that the Harappa civilization was a nonviolent matriarchal culture that celebrated the divine within, such as through the worship of a mother goddess (Clark, 2003). I argue that South Asian mothers of the diaspora need more cultural representations that celebrate the mother goddess as a central part of their spirituality.

In addition, the intersectionality of sexual identities, yoga and the yoga traditions as they are taken up in contemporary culture, in particular,

heteronormative privilege, is a feminist issue. In Canada, legal rights such as same-sex marriage demonstrate social progress, but there remains exclusion of Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (2SLGBTQIA+) peoples and communities in many places (Park, 2014). Ballard and Kripalani (2016) explain that queer and trans yoga classes can help with “bullying, harassment, the suicide of loved ones, suicidal thoughts, addictions, and recovery from difficulties with body image” (p. 314). Also, “counterculture spaces provide an opportunity for in-depth engagement with yoga philosophy in the context of significant trauma” (Ballard & Kripalani, 2016, p. 314). In addition, language, safe(r) spaces, gender-neutral bathrooms, and the potential for some of the 2SLGBTQIA+ populations to engage in a more profound spiritual practice increase inclusion in yoga practice (Ballard & Kripalani, 2016). There is a need to explore further how the yoga traditions could benefit marginalized populations such as 2SLGBTQIA+ given the prevalence of homophobia.

Language can play a role in the process of coming to inhabit our bodies differently. When I think about teaching feminist-informed yoga, it means being conscious of language, just like an instructor teaching an Introductory Women’s and Gender Studies class. For example, as a teacher, I avoid the use of binary language that reinforces patriarchal gender roles; instead, I use gender-neutral pronouns to become more inclusive of the gender fluidity in a classroom (Wentling, Windsor, Schilt, & Lucal, 2008). As a teacher, I have a feminist vision of the yoga classroom, and it seeks to end multiple oppressions and sexist patriarchy. In addition, as a teacher, I am guided by the principles of feminist pedagogy to empower students, create

community, and facilitate leadership (Shrewsbury, 1993). I argue that healing for me as a marginalized mother requires time away from children and child-rearing to remember myself beyond my role as a mother (Garey, 1995). I also wonder if it would be helpful for some marginalized mothers to connect with others where they can discuss not only their child's development but also their transition into parenthood and would public yoga spaces could be an excellent point to help improve access to mental health services and addiction services? Marginalized mothers could benefit from going to women's centres where they can get help, and feminist-informed yoga should be available in places like women's centres or women's health clinics so they can find a community of mothers and solutions to their problems such as mental health and addictions. These should be the venue for feminist-informed yoga classes. Mainstream yoga studios could also develop a program to help marginalized mothers to access mental health and addictions services. However, this means being able to discuss the unique aspects of marginalized motherhood in a safe space. For example, for me as a marginalized mother, it is essential not being the only non-white person in the room as this offers some protection from racism and microaggressions (Lewis, Sharp, Remnant, & Redpath, 2015). For me, as a marginalized mother, a yoga space should not erase the needs of parents who do not use parenting labels like ‘mother,’ or who do not identify as a woman/able-bodied/straight/nuclear family (Malpas, 2011). As a marginalized single mother, it is critical to remember that central to my healing, acknowledging that there are all kinds of ways to build a family and that I need community and solidarity in order to heal (Taft et al, 2011).

I have come to believe that there is a need to recognize that numerous second-generation South Asian and other racialized mothers have been shown that survival means working as hard as possible without complaining or self-care. This type of survival was what I have learned from observing my own mother. However, I have come to understand that my own healing must be facilitated in spaces tailored for me as a marginalized mother. These spaces must offer relaxation without feelings. In addition, I certainly do not make mental health and well-being a priority. There are countless barriers that exist in the social and health systems for marginalized mothers and it is only recently that contemporary society has seen a rise for intersectional feminist counselling services. As a marginalized mother, I recognize that undoing previous patriarchal teachings about domestic roles, the lack of importance of self-care, and the constant practice of self-sacrifice is an essential part of my healing journey.

In this next section, I centre my own theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga in my lived experiences as a marginalized South Asian mother. This centering offers healing in the context of cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and commodification of yoga and yoga traditions. In particular, I draw awareness to the exclusion of South Asian women as central in understanding the harms of these practices. For example, during my 200-hour yoga teacher training, I realized that I could not practice yoga with teachers and students who are deeply embedded in the spiritual materialism and commodification of yoga and who have no interest in learning the more in-depth knowledge of the yoga traditions. For example, a recent campaign to ‘reclaim the bindis’ by South Asians who objected to its use as a fashion trend

at a large American music festival (Madrid, 2004) highlights the broader issues and relevance of cultural appropriation. In addition, I think that the criticism by South Asians can be expanded to include other marginalized populations, in particular, in the context of cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and commodification. Within the issue of cultural appropriation, are broader issues of the use of materials that are considered sacred to specific populations based on their racial-ethnic practice. This could encourage modern posture yoga teachers to learn that South Asian marginalized mothers are not given a life of privilege and they should not be looking at me as a needy person. Modern posture yoga practitioners should have respect and welcome marginalized mothers into their space with deeper intellect. For example, Indigenous mothers participating in sweat lodges are reclaiming these ceremonies, but sometimes in a context of cultural appropriation. Sweat lodges are often practiced incorrectly by non-Indigenous people and can be a form of cultural appropriation (Khamsi, 2019). More exploration is needed to understand the experiences of cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and commodification in healing populations of marginalized mothers.

On a broader level, the harms of cultural appropriation for marginalized populations are not to be underestimated. For example, Adolf Hitler practiced yoga and extensively drew from the yoga traditions, including such ideas as *karma* and the symbol of the Swastika. In fact, Hitler took the Swastika, an ancient Jain symbol and reversed it in direction for his vision for an Aryan nation. I am not saying the modern yogis are like Hitler, but there are potential harms to cultural appropriation when used in the context of evil. We need to

honour South Asian mothers for their intellectual, spiritual, and cultural knowledge that they bring to yoga spaces. Also centering my lived experiences as a South Asian marginalized mother offers a path away from cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and commodification that is so prevalent in a modern posture yoga movement. I believe it could make a big difference.

5.6 Feminist-Informed Yoga, Trauma, and Marginalized Mothers

In this next section, I draw on the link between the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga and trauma for marginalized mothers. Healing from trauma requires embodied approaches such as through the practice of yoga (Berila, Klein, & Jackson, 2016). The bridging of yoga and trauma brings a healing approach to me as a marginalized mother. In my experiences I identified healing from the perspective of intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma signifies that trauma can shift from the first generation of trauma survivors to the second generation. In my case, I am a second-generation Canadian who was impacted by my family's trauma of being displaced and tradition-bound. More specifically, this intergenerational trauma is based on my parents' experiences as refugees to Canada, along with an arranged marriage, and deep-seated xenophobia and racism experienced by our entire family. In the context of a marginalized motherhood, I recognize that specialized approaches are needed for some pregnant and new mothers with trauma and addictions (Nathoo, 2010). This requires a broader critical understanding of the complexity in areas such as fetal alcohol (Cloete, & Ramugondo, 2015), harm reduction (Pinkham, & Malinowska-Sempruch, 2008), cultural safety (Van Herk, Smith & Andrew, 2011), violence

(Meetoo & Mirza, 2007), and trauma-informed care (Bowen & Murshid, 2016). For me, as a marginalized mother who has experienced intergenerational trauma, trauma-informed care becomes essential to any theoretical understanding of healing for me. Trauma-informed care can help other populations of marginalized mothers. Also, trauma-informed care highlights what is often missing from the Western medical approaches that fail to recognize the impacts of race, gender, sexuality, and class, and that create and maintain oppression in our collective lives. As Shimmin (2017) et al., state,

> Traumatic events by their very nature set up a power differential where one entity (whether an individual, an event, a system or a force of nature) has power over another. An individual's experience of these events or circumstances are shaped in the context of this powerlessness and feelings of humiliation, guilt, shame, betrayal or silencing often shape the experience of this event. It is important that in interpersonal interactions — something that plays a very large role when it comes to public involvement in health research — that these feelings of powerlessness are not reproduced or reconstituted in any way (p. 539).

In addition, for me as a marginalized mother, gender plays a vital role in addressing my own healing from trauma. One of the reasons could be that, as a woman trying to address their trauma, I am often marginalized in primary care settings (e.g., doctor's office). In my life, I have never found a doctor who was not paternalistic. Generally, I have found that all medical doctors have attitudes and practices in which a physician determines the decision-making process for the patient. Whenever I have made requests outside of the normal treatment of Western medicine, they have not taken them seriously. For example, I believe that many doctors are still not educated about the impact of race and gender in the lives of women of colour. When I suggest that they leave the door open or I suggest to them that there are other ways to handle

the care of my daughter, I receive judgement. For example, I received criticism about my choice in place of childbirth and my approaches to her sexual health and education. Many doctors do not understand that I do not want to talk to men about my body or answer questions about my previous relationship history. The lack of adequate services providers leads to poor preventive public health and limited healing strategies for marginalized mothers. Speciality programs for marginalized mothers should include recentering non-medical services. There are a variety of types of these programs. For example, marginalized mothers who experience addictions can attend speciality programs. Speciality programs that follow trauma-informed practice guidelines should be included which have not yet been well-integrated into mainstream public health care settings. Mojtabai (2005) found that individuals receiving trauma-informed care in speciality addiction services including prevention and treatment were less likely to remain in addiction centres compared to those who had treatment at a primary care setting. There is a need to create spaces to heal from trauma, often because marginalized mothers have been excluded from many social and political structures that fail to recognize their unique needs.

5.7 Feminist-Informed Yoga, Addictions, and Marginalized Mothers

This next section explores the links between the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga, addictions, and marginalized mothers. There is a link between feminist-informed yoga and an evolving theory of addiction in the context of a healing approach for marginalized mothers. Gabor Maté (2010) states that a person with an addiction engages in repeated behaviours that keeps a person engaging in damaging behaviours, even though they harm

others and do not care how they look externally. For me as a marginalized mother, I am addicted to my phone through compulsive checking of emails, recreation, and texting. My phone is my security in an undefined way because it connects to me to the world around me and the people that I know and I am in a constant search for security. Maté's definition of addiction includes behavioural addictions and identifies the same region of the brain playing a role in all addictions. The phone is damaging to me and others as it takes away from me being present to the actual human beings around me. Even though it is helpful in one way, it is also blocking me from the people around me. The time used on the phone takes away from me building human relations with friends and family. This is much like substance use that limits one's sense of reality in a state of euphoria. While a behavioural addiction, such Gabor Maté's addiction to classical music or my phone addiction, are less stigmatized than substance use. A phone offers me as a marginalized mother the freedom to call anyone if I need help. It also provides GPS when driving, often alone as a single parent. It also consumes my time and energy due to excessive use of it. Overall, all of these addictive things that humans can do to hide pain and trauma. But a feminist-informed yoga brings that trauma to the forefront and increases awareness of trauma and the need to be more mindful about it. Over the past few years, I have become more aware of how the phone consumes my life when I am not parenting or working. It is often the first thing I look at in the morning and the last thing I look at in the night. I believe that engaging in a feminist-informed yoga practice offers me greater self-awareness to my phone addiction.

I centre the concept of addiction as an important social justice issue

(Hart, 2017). However, why is this relevant to marginalized mothers? Susan Boyd (2000) argues that family and motherhood are central to the cultural debates around women and addictions (Boyd, 2000). Also, there are many stereotypes and myths about mothers in our society (Boyd, 2000). Stereotypes about marginalized mothers are feminist concerns, which are rooted in oppression caused by racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. The regulation of reproduction by the state such as though limited access to diverse sexual education in schools, limited birth control choices in some areas, and limited maternal health options for pregnant women. These reproductive limitations are central to understanding how addiction is a social justice issue for marginalized mothers. I feel this topic has been central to my understanding. However, the history of medicine demonstrates that up until the 18th century, the body was viewed as one-sexed (Oudshoorn, 2003). It was later in the history of medicine that anatomists began to sex bodies (Oudshoorn, 2003). Today, the idea of sexed bodies still exists and is the basis of Western medicine in which all public health is based (Oudshoorn, 2003). Reproduction includes biological reproduction such as puberty, in which girls are introduced to the Human Papilloma Virus vaccine and birth control. Both offer tremendous empowerment to young girls in their journey into womanhood. Birth control in particular is now sold and targeted towards girls with the added benefits of acne prevention with varying hormone levels (Oudshoorn, 2003). The pharmaceutical industry profits from the birth control pill (Oudshoorn, 2003). Feminist ideas of gender and sexuality and their role in reproduction is a way to decolonize the power of state in the regulation of reproduction. This decolonization is also a social justice issues because all

this regulation limits the agency of marginalized mothers.

There are many barriers acting on marginalized mothers' ability to regulate their mind/body/spirit, which makes their healing journey difficult. For many women, pregnancy is a time of transformation and it is also a time of enormous impact by the power of the state. Also, the ideology of mothering, as pregnancy is both a biological and social event (Boyd, 2000).

Gender is the central concept in understanding addictions and yoga. There is a need to recognize my gender-specific requirements in addiction prevention and treatment as a marginalized single South Asian mother. I wonder if other marginalized mothers have gender-specific requirements in addiction prevention and treatment based on their lived experiences as well. Feminist-informed yoga offers a healing approach for marginalized mothers with addictions in contemporary culture. For some marginalized mothers with addictions, medical doctors are unable to provide the necessary prescription. In any environment in which there are marginalized mothers, they should be respected and supported with community-based approaches such as the inclusion of community members and in spaces that are free from judgement.

Niccols, Dell, and Clarke (2010) state that, for some marginalized mothers with addictions, there are few treatment approaches. Also, amongst marginalized mothers, very few include the inclusion of spaces for their children. For example, if a mother with addictions practices yoga in a treatment program in which their children were with them in same building, they would both be more relaxed and serviced well. This is an important gender-specific issue for marginalized mothers with addictions as trust and care for the child is most important. Secondly, approaches that integrate a

marginalized mothers' cultural needs impact a feminist-informed yoga practice. For example, a feminist-informed yoga class that offers smudging or other cultural needs during a yoga class could be helpful. Culture is central to the feminist-informed yoga practice. Some professional yoga teachers or some professional community-based helpers such doctors, nurses and healthcare should be aware that marginalized mothers are a particular group of people that need nurturing, kindness, and empathy, to resolve their addictions. Marginalized mothers should be approached with a holistic resolve rather than a medical prescription. Weisner and Schmidt (1992) write that women who use addictions face the stigma that may influence where women seek help, and those women are more likely than men to seek help in mental health and primary care settings rather than in speciality addiction treatment settings.

Notwithstanding that millions of dollars are spent on addiction prevention and countless self-help books exist, addictions continue to expand both personal and social tragedies. Something needs to change. A movement towards a feminist-informed yoga that is centred on the power of healing a community and emphasizes the spiritual and intellectual values of the yoga traditions can bring positive change. Feminism teaches about the power of politics and social structures, while a feminist approach to addictions offers an opportunity to explore the yoga traditions in the context of political and social structures that impact marginalized mothers in unique ways. In particular, the Indigenous mothering concept of interconnectedness could provide healing (Marsden, 2014). Teachings of integrating interconnectedness, which are embedded in the spiritual idea of spiritual essence, severely challenge the

dominant (i.e., Western) worldview that reinforces hierarchies of oppression and privileged access to power, influence, resources, and material possessions. This clash of worldviews is not just a theory; it has real interpersonal impacts upon mothering and the wellbeing of children when Indigenous mothers are trying to pass on teachings and live according to Indigenous principals (Marsden, 2014). As a non-Indigenous single mother, I believe that a more in-depth understanding of the meaning of the interconnections of life could inform a feminist yoga in the context of substance use and behavioural addictions. There is a lot of potential in further researching the ideas of addiction and yoga and yoga traditions and its potential benefits for marginalized mothers with addictions, in contemporary Canadian culture.

5.8 Feminist-Informed Yoga, Shamanism, and Marginalized Mothers

This section explores how a theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga is rooted in the ancient shamanic traditions of the world and has healing potential for marginalized mothers. There is little to no research on the healing benefits of yoga traditions and shamanism, but as a marginalized mother, I see that both traditions have the potential to offer me a unique healing approach. I argue that both offer healing through the ability to alter human states of consciousness. However, before I engage in an exploration of this link, I need to address with a decolonial lens how the Western imagination often fetishizes Indigenous experiences and replicates them such as in the case of neo-shamanism. Often these contemporary Western imaginations dismiss the history of oppression, imposition of Western cultural values in particular the binary gender relations (Thalji & Yakushko, 2018, p. 148).

Finally, I critically explore more closely the potential health and wellness benefits of both yoga and shamanism.

The archaic yoga of the pre-Vedic traditions often bore the name *tapas*, which means heat and is a reference to the inner heat or energy produced by asceticism (Feuerstein, 2002). In addition, the incorporation and integration of holistic cultural and spiritual teachings could include the integration of drumming and singing, which could allow for a more embodied healing experience. On the other hand, as an ancient human institution, shamanism is a practice with the capacity to adapt to innate psychological tendencies (Singh, 2018). Shamans provide healing for the observer, such as providing insights about their lives because they can interact with other realms to gather information and transform during a ceremony (Singh, 2018). For me, as a marginalized mother, the possibility to obtain healing from a shaman could be very insightful to a healing approach from intergenerational trauma and addictions such as my addiction to my smartphone. Yoga and shamanism can centre the mind to bring a higher elevation and remove the toxins from my body thorough cleansing.

I am quite knowledgeable about yoga and the yoga traditions. The idea of combining my understanding of yoga and yoga traditions with the ancient knowledge of shamanism as a combined practice may be relevant for marginalized mothers. There is also research potential in the exploration of the healing through the combined practice of yoga and shamanism centred in gendered experiences. In particular, the gendered experiences of marginalized mothers who are interested in the combined practice of yoga and shamanism. Finally, as shown in Figure 1 (Historical Overview and

Timeline of Significant Aspects in the Timeline of the Yoga Traditions) ancient yoga has shamanic roots. I do draw from the experiences documented in the healing potential of Indigenous women reclaiming shamanism a central role in their community and way of life. For example, patriarchy stemming from the colonization of the *Hushahu* peoples of the Amazon Basin placed men as dominant in shamanic roles. Allowing men to be able to lead participants in the shamanic healing ceremonies was oppressive and limiting to *Hushahu* women (Thalji & Yakushko, 2018). However, in a recent interview with one *Hushahu* shaman woman, she said "I placed in my heart freedom for myself. To make my own story, now. And make my own path" (Thalji & Yakushko, 2018, p. 148). For this *Hushahu* woman, there was a deep personal meaning on becoming the first female shaman in her community, along with a newly found freedom through her shamanic initiation (Thalji & Yakushko, 2018). There may be some value in learning more about the healing potential of shamanism for some marginalized mothers, especially those impacted by trauma and addictions, in contemporary Canadian culture. In Appendix B, I have included a list of yoga poses with animal symbolism, as the start to a road map that links yoga with animal symbolism through a more profound engagement with the yoga traditions. Animal symbolism is also an integral part of shamanism such the connection of practice animals (Doore, & Harner, 1987). Centering the practice of feminist-informed yoga with animal symbolism may bring about healing as it helps reconnect more deeply to cosmic consciousness for some marginalized mothers. However, more research is needed to explore the potential meanings and benefits of such deep connections between yoga and shamanism.

For me, as a marginalized mother, centering the mind-body-spirit in yoga and shamanism could help me to find the freedom to grasp my own full humanity. Yoga and shamanism have the potential to bring some marginalized mothers back to nature (*prakrti*) which has healing potential in the context of decolonization, as shamanism was considered a male role after colonization (Rappaport, 1981). The use of shamanic rituals can help, in particular, the healing power of the plant called Ayahuasca. Maté (2014) says that “ayahuasca can evoke direct but long-suppressed memories of trauma” (para 4). It can also” trigger emotional states and visions of horror and pain that are not direct remembrances, but emotional imprints of trauma” (Maté, 2014, para. 4). Also, “there is nothing incorrect with that - so long as the person can stay present to their experience, and can accompany themselves through the pain, grief, and fear that may arise” (Maté, 2014). There is no research that links the use of shamanic rituals with yoga for marginalized mothers. In a healing approach, the practice of altered states of consciousness, in particular, the potential link between yoga and shamanism needs further investigation. For example, the rituals of Nepalese shamans are still being practiced today and may offer insight into the relationship with yoga and the yoga traditions.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion

There are several key findings in this dissertation. First, South Asian women of the diaspora, particularly mothers, are oppressed by systemic racism. Second, yoga, as practiced in the Jain way of life, is a holistic approach to well-being and spiritual health and this is a logical resource for these women to access, given that it is part of their cultural heritage. Third, it is difficult to access this form of yoga in a meaningful way in Canada given the colonial appropriation and commodification of the practice and systemic racism, which means that individual South Asian women experience racism in yoga studios. Fourth, through this autoethnography, I offer ways for South Asian women to reconnect and explore yoga and the yoga traditions and reflect on its benefits. Fifth, some practical measures can be used to assist South Asian women in decolonizing their lives and encourage a Jain way of life.

I used a decolonizing theoretical framework to guide my autoethnography, challenging the production of knowledge through a Western lens that enforces practices of study and thinking while it minimizes discourses and practices in the lives of non-Western traditions (Imas & Weston, 2012). In addition, decolonization was also included as a theoretical framework of intellectual decolonization in which the colonial designs have made the colonized individuals feel inferior to them (Prasad, 2015). Finally, I used decolonial feminist theory that centered gender in the project of decolonization for South Asian women based on their experiences and worldviews as being marginalized. I constructed new South Asian feminist

theories to create new possibilities and new ways of reframing knowledge about traditions and ways of knowing.

More specifically, to answer research question one, “what is the theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga in contemporary Canadian culture?” I developed a theoretical foundation for a feminist-informed yoga that draws on yoga and yoga traditions. The findings from this study include a definition of yoga, which means ‘union.’ I asked how this union manifests for me. Yoga offers a way to heal from the trauma of oppression. When taught in informed ways, it can provide spaces for healing, transformation, and spiritual awakening. I took into account both my culture and feminism, which are both significant parts of my identity as a yoga practitioner. I offered an approach to healing in the context of a patriarchal society. I argued that in perhaps no other space beside the yoga space, is the Indian woman’s body hated more. This because through colonial discourses, South Asian women have been and continue to be both sexualized and racialized. I discuss how my own family, who were South Asian refugees, were expelled from Uganda in 1972 and experienced trauma and addictions perpetuated by racism and xenophobia. I argued that intergenerational trauma impacted my life due to my parents’ experiences of being refugees and having a forced arranged marriage. I advocate that immigrant and refugee-serving organizations “have a responsibility to be informed about the concerns around gender-based violence” (Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Addictions, 2009, para 4). In addition, these organizations should be able “to offer compassionate, trauma-informed, social justice-informed and fitting services for immigrants and refugees who are survivors of violence” (Alaggia, Regehr, & Rishchynski,

2009, p. 335). Finally, “the broader community needs to build its capacity to prevent, recognize, and respond to gender-based violence within immigrant and refugee communities, and to support survivors” (Ahmad, Riaz, Barata, & Stewart, 2004, p. 272). There needs to be a deeper understanding of the roles of oppression and marginalization in the lives of South Asian women as central to a healing approach.

From a cultural perspective, I situated a theoretical foundation of feminist-informed yoga as a second-generation, Jain woman of colour born and raised in a mid-sized Canadian city but also as part of the larger South Asian diasporic populations throughout the world. I also situate this research as a single marginalized mother. I argued that the modern posture yoga movement needs to be decolonized since its focus has been on the commodification and it has failed to empower South Asian women. A decolonial approach removes posture yogis as the central figures of yoga and roots a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga in the lived experience of the spiritual and cultural traditions of South Asian women of the Canadian diaspora.

I draw on representations of South Asian women rooted in the shamanic roots of yoga, the ancient yoga traditions, and the retelling of the history of yoga. A Jain way of life is rooted in a yogic routine that allows for clear thinking, and healthier and mindful living. *Ahimsa* is central to the practice of a Jain of life and is at the heart of a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga. However, I asked about the role of domestic violence in the lives of Jain immigrant and refugee communities. I highlighted the role of violence against women in the South Asian cultural context, and I asked about the role

patriarchal violence being ingrained in modern South Asian culture is. Other principles from a Jain way of life include *samayika*, a daily focused meditation, that are central to the yoga traditions. Commercialized versions of meditation can be potentially damaging because, when removed from the cultural context, they can result in physical or psychological problems.

Karma is a central concept in a Jain way of life, central to its cosmology (Chapple, 1990). *Karma* in each individual regulates the cycle of one's birth and present-day experiences and is in sharp contrast to the Western ways of life in which non-humans are devalued. I centred the moral foundation of yoga as central in its ethical teachings. I drew from the *sāmkhya* philosophy, in particular, the concept of *prakrti* (mind, body, nature) that is needed in order to make ourselves more whole. I asked, do feminists need to create this separate sense of being to get to know itself as the one (union)? I think yes, feminists do need to create this separate sense of being because they have often experienced or witnessed the damaging effects of patriarchy. *Sattva* (goodness) provided a perspective that helps humans become more aware of the afflictions that often they feel due to structural forces that cause and maintain oppression. *Patanjali's* second yoga *sutra* 1.2 *citta* (consciousness) *vritti* (fluctuations) *nirodha* (quieting) the mind (Feuerstein, 2011) is central to a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga. I asked what kinds of *nirodha* (quieting) of the mind are people actually looking for in the contemporary yoga world that excludes our minds, bodies, and spirits from its spaces. Feminists are looking for a certain kind of space that feels safe and offers healing from the trauma of marginalization and oppression. I provided the perspective on *guru* consciousness, which embraces spiritual

transformation over thousands of years of yoga traditions that happens through a yoga practice. The *guru* traditions from India and brought to other parts of the world helped to create space for collaborative models of spiritual transition. However, modern yoga teachers engaged in grotesque duplication of culture, passing on patterns of movement that do not lead to higher thinking. Intersectional perspectives on yoga and feminism provided critical voices. In particular, as Berila, Klein, and Jackson (2016) explained the role of oppression in causing trauma, the need for healing for oppressed populations, and freedom to live embodied lives. In addition, to answer the research question one, decolonization of yoga became centred on issues around cultural appropriation, spiritual materialism, and commercialization. I argued that cultural appropriation occurs when there is an unquestioned sense of entitlement towards yogic rituals of people of colour, in particular, diasporic South Asian women of colour in Canada. Racism is often at the heart of this cultural appropriation. Spiritual materialism occurs in many ways in contemporary culture such as through consumption of spiritual practices in the self-care paradigm, the use of South Asian gods and goddess as decoration in modern yoga spaces, and to larger extent companies like Lululemon that profit off yoga and yoga traditions. These examples demonstrated how physical materials are being portrayed to offer an end to human suffering. Under capitalism, commodification is not limited to religion or religious traditions but to broader nature, women's bodies, and even consciousness.

I centred the concept of addictions as a social justice issue and challenged medical ways of knowing and recentered traditional ways of knowing, such as through yoga and yoga traditions. Humans have engaged in

altered states of consciousness for thousands of years. One root of modern-day drug addictions is rooted in increased disassociation from *prakrti* (nature) and a growing reliance on technology. I drew from the cultural and feminist perspectives on trauma and addictions. In particular, the concept of being trauma-informed which centred the lived experiences of marginalized and oppressed populations. This autoethnography revealed that healing through altered states of consciousness needs to be explored through a feminist lens trauma and addiction. There are possibilities in altered states of consciousness through both feminist-informed yoga and shamanism as both offer potential benefits for increased health and well-being in the context of decolonization.

To answer research question two, “what are some of the ways in which feminist-informed yoga can be applied as a healing approach to various populations of marginalized mothers in a mid-sized Canadian city?” I drew from my definition of feminist-informed yoga and situated my lived experiences as a marginalized mother in this autoethnography. Marginalized mothers experience stress, trauma, addictions, isolation, abuse, and many other factors. I offered a path towards healing and greater embodiment for marginalized mothers in a mid-sized Canadian city. I drew on racial-ethnic struggles of marginalized motherhood in contemporary culture as central. These marginalized populations of mothers included South Asian immigrant/refugee and diasporic mothers but also other racial-ethnic mothers such as Indigenous mothers. In addition, Black and Asian mothers face racial-ethnic struggles that require healing. I centred the spiritual experiences of South Asian marginalized mothers of the Indian diaspora in Canada.

An engagement with cosmic consciousness rooted in the lived experiences of generations of South Asian mothers brings greater self-awareness. In addition, I centred my experiences as a second-generation diasporic marginalized mother of South Asian refugee parents. As we followed a Jain way of life, I see my connection to the cosmic universe as central to any practice of yoga that will bring transformative change in me. Maybe cosmic consciousness can bring about transformative change in others to other populations of marginalized mothers. South Asian marginalized mothers bring tremendous knowledge of spiritual and cultural traditions to any practice of yoga; they bring ancestral wisdom, traditional ways of knowing and transformative strategies that are healing. I drew on my fifteen years of experience working in Indigenous communities as an academic and five years as an instructor in Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Manitoba to help me understand that healing must foster a deeper connection to our cosmic consciousness.

Indigenous mothers draw on concepts such as woman's spirit which is a sound, a vibration, which came forward in the universal energies. Dawn Marsden (2005) centers the role of spirituality in how Indigenous mothers raise their children, in particular the concept of the interconnectedness of life and the universal consciousness. I argue that recentering the gaze towards a deeper understanding of universal consciousness in both Indigenous and South Asian marginalized mothers' communities enable a deeper healing for me as a marginalized single mother of colour in the racist mid-sized Canadian city of my birth. However, I wanted to be clear that the approaches that I have outlined in this dissertation are potentially transferable to mothers in other

communities. I believe that we are all connected and it is an approach that can also be applied to men, in the context of theories around masculinities. Also, not all South Asian women do yoga. I imagine many of them have not had time or took it for granted that it was part of their life. Yoga is not owned by one community, and not all women are treated the same. What I am saying is that in a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga everyone has a spirituality but white women, for example, have white privilege. This can mean that doors open for them easier and they have fewer hurdles to cross compared to other groups of women such as women of colour, like myself. When women experience trauma from all backgrounds, their approach to healing from trauma is different. The practice of feminist-informed yoga can help all women but more so South Asian and other marginalized women who experience trauma. Spiritualty is the connection to cosmic consciousness; it is genderless, race-less, and welcomes all to open if their minds are able to connect to the subconsciousness to the consciousness. A feminist-informed yoga is a pathway towards this.

The links between a Jain way of life, shamanism, and Indigenous mothering is a contribution of this research. In the world before we had electricity and modern technologies, we had a shamanic way of life that was universal and as such it was applied to Indigenous mothers. A Jain way of life is rooted in the *sramana* (seeker) traditions in which people lived and worshipped the five elements. Indigenous mothers are decolonizing themselves from the horrendous impacts of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and today the child welfare system. Also, marginalized mothers need healing from trauma and addictions.

This study makes a contribution to knowledge because it provides a theoretical foundation of a feminist-informed yoga that draws from both feminism and culture. The theory of feminist-informed yoga draws on 5,000 years of the yoga traditions and feminist issues of violence against women. First, this study uniquely contributes to the existing literature because it draws on both yoga and the yoga traditions from South Asian diasporic perspective. For example, the concept of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) should be reintroduced in any practice of yoga with South Asian women as a way of discussing violence in the broader community. Second, this study contributes to the idea of exploring altered states of consciousness for health and wellness benefits. For example, the link between yoga and shamanism in which both bring about new visions and realities for the seeker on their journey through addictions or trauma. Third, this study values the personal and experiential which features the experience of the self in the context of being a yoga student and teacher whose identity is rooted in the experience of being a Jain woman of colour. In addition, the experiences of '*risk*' in presenting the vulnerable self in research and using my emotions and bodily experiences as a means of understanding are evident through my reflections of observing violence against South Asian women in diasporic communities. The role of storytelling in research offers deep healing potential,

> Storytelling is a highly nuanced means of communication, usually articulating cause-and-effect relationships between events over a period of time, and often in relation to a certain character. it is also grounded in a level of realism that might be less evident with other forms of communication. Storytelling potentially draws on commonalities between the story or the storyteller and the listener or reader. This, combined with the underlying assumption of credibility in the teller's story or experience, can potentially motivate and persuade individuals towards behavioural change and reduces resistance to any action implied by the message (McCall, Shallcross, Wilson, Fuller, & Hayward, 2019, p. 12).

Fourth, I demonstrate the responsibilities of stories and storytelling. I used reflexivity to consider my place and privileges while I used telling my own stories to break long-held silences on suppressed experiences such as those created by racism and racist encounters. Fifth, I took a relationally responsible approach, while carefully safeguarding the identities and privacy of participants. Participants were any people in which I referred to during reflection on my interactions with them. It was possible to protect them and left out parts of their stories that might not be fair to share in an autoethnography about me. In addition, I focused on the accessibility of this study to engage and provide healing for myself, my family, and those who read it. For example, I felt that my use of Sanskrit terms translated to English throughout made this more accessible to the reader while making this study more accessible to me. I used terms and knowledge of the yoga traditions. I thought about all the different people who would read my thesis and how it would provide healing for myself, my family, and the wider yoga and feminist and scholarly communities that might read this and their feelings in reading about some of these issues.

The issues of transferability were determined first, by assessing if the story speaks to me, as the author. Second, generalizability is assessed by how other readers are informed on the topic. The goal of an autoethnography "is to open us up to the conversation around a topic and not close conversation" (Ellis, 2004, p. 22). The work in this study will hopefully open the reader to conversations around yoga and the yoga traditions rather than shut it down. The reader should be inspired to learn more about the history of yoga and yoga traditions. If the reader is a yoga student or yoga teacher, they

should reflect on the findings from this study and be more self-aware of these issues in their yoga practice. This study also delivers cultural criticism and theoretical reflection, social change, and calls us to action.

However, this study has two main limitations. The first limitation of this autoethnography is a strong emphasis on the self. Throughout this autoethnography, I have referred to my own personal lived experiences in both my cultural identity as a Canadian South Asian woman and a committed feminist activist and now emerging scholar. Some readers may view this as a limitation because there is a resistance to accepting autoethnography as an objective research method. This resistance is due to the fact that some academics view autoethnography as being self-indulgent, narcissistic and individualized (Méndez, 2013). The second limitation of autoethnography is that the reader might find it difficult to follow because of subjective interpretation that arises through personal narratives (Méndez, 2013). The reader might want answers to questions that arise for them through reading this autoethnography, but it is difficult for the researcher to answer.

There are several future research applicabilities. This study is useful in several ways. First, recentering yoga around the yoga traditions of South Asian diasporic women in Canada is important to decolonization and the harmful effects of spiritual materialism, cultural appropriation, and commodification of yoga. Second, a pilot study of the practicality of feminist-informed yoga for marginalized mothers should be conducted. This study should consider the impact and approaches to trauma, addictions, and shamanism in marginalized mothers. Third, there is a potential for further research on altered states of consciousness, specifically the relationship of

yoga and shamanism as central for healing marginalized mothers with trauma or addictions.

By practicing yoga and meditation, healing is affirmed for the mind-body-soul connections. Every vibration of sound gives us a thought, and I need the positive thought that can be attained through silencing the mind through yoga and yoga traditions, meditation, and chanting. I can connect mind-body-spirit to the life energy, and life force to connect to the cosmic consciousness and self-realization is the affirmation of healing with the will power that is created. The healing power of chanting and affirmation, spiritual realization, vibrating notes and inducement to awaken the silent healing power of cosmic energy work quickly to dissolve disease, sorrow. The power of prana, life force in healing is the healing force of the future. The mind can produce ill health, and it can also produce good health. Every word I speak should be soul vibrations of the cosmic universe.

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Appendix 1: List of Important Sanskrit Terms to a Feminist-Informed Yoga

Sanskrit Word	English Translation	Definition
ardha-padmasana	Half-Lotus	Yoga pose
Ahimsa	Non-Harming or Non-Violence	The nonparticipation from harmful actions, judgements, and words. A significant moral discipline (*yama*) in yoga and Jain way of life (Feuerstein, 1998; Fox, 1993).
ahamkara	I-maker	The knowledge of individuation or ego (Feuerstein, 1998; Salagame, 2010).
Acara	Conduct	This means a way of life, approach to spiritual practice (Feuerstein, 1998; Williams, 1991).
Asana	Seat, posture	This signifies physical posture and is the third limb (*anga*) of Patanjali's eightfold path (astha-anga-yoga); Initially, this meant mostly meditation 'postures', but with the evolution of hatha yoga this feature of the yogic path was developed (Alter, 2004; Feuerstein, 1996).
asteya	Non-stealing	The practice of asteya requires that one must not steal or have the intent to steal another's property (Langøien, 2012). This can be through action, speech, and thoughts (Langøien, 2012).
Aparigraha	Non-possession	Non-possession for lay Jains means not being consumed by owning possessions (Langøien, 2012). It is also one of the five *yamas* in Patanjali's yoga sutras.
Bramacharya	The right use of sexual energy	The right use of sexual energy (Piper, 2001).
Buddhi	Awareness wisdom	This means awareness, wisdom and is also used to denote 'thought' or 'cognition' and is part of the Sāmkhya philosophy (Edgerton, 1924;Feuerstein, 1996).
citta	Consciousness, mind	The finite mind, psyche or consciousness (Feuerstein, 1998; Feuerstein, 1996).
dharana	Holding	This means concentration and is the sixth limb of *Patanjali's* eightfold path, consisting of the prolonged focusing of attention on a single mental object and leading to meditation (*dhyana*) (Feuerstein, 1996; Telles, Raghavendra, Naveen, Manjunath, Kumar, & Subramanya, 2013).
dhyana	Meditation	This means meditative absorption or contemplation and is the seventh limb of *Patanjali's* eightfold path that is understood as deepening of concentration (Feuerstein, 1996; Vaze, & Joshi, 2010).
Duhka	Suffering	This means conditioned or finite existence is inherently sorrowful or painful. It is this insight that provides the impetus for the spiritual struggle to realize liberation (*moksha*) (Feuerstein, 1996; Nielsen, 2014).

Gunas	Virtues	This consists of three virtues central to the ***sāmkhya*** philosophy; The *gunas* have a built-in continuum to reach *purusha* and to redefine our awareness through *sattva*.
Guru	Heavy with authority	This means teacher, guide, or expert of specific knowledge, such as the yoga traditions as the dispeller of ignorance (Feuerstein, 2007).
Jiva	Soul	This means consciousness living breathing and includes both animated (e.g. humans) and inanimated objects (e.g. rock and soil) as philosophical beliefs (Chapple, 2008).
Karma	Action	This means 'activity' or the minute effects caused by an action, which is responsible for one's own rebirth (Connelly, 2019). "Also for experiences during the present life and future teachings is to escape the effects of past karma and prevent the production of new karma and whether good or bad" (Feuerstein, 1996; Mulla, & Krishnan, 2006).
Khadaga-asana	Sitting pose	Yoga pose
Kumbhaka	retention	Retention of Breath (Feuerstein, 1996).
Loka	universe	"A primary concept in Jain cosmology and its constituents (living beings, matter, space, time) and an uncreated entity, existing since infinity, having neither and beginning nor an end" (Feuerstein, 1996, p. 24).
moksha	Liberation/Salvation	Moksha is a blissful state of existence free from karmic bondage (Mishra, 2013).
Niyama	Restraint	"This is the second limb of ***Patanjali's*** eightfold path, which consists in the practice of purity, contentment, austerity (*tapas*), study (*svadhyaya*) and devotion to the Lord (*Ishvara-pranidhana*)" (Feuerstein, 1996. p. 50)
nirodha	Quieting	This means quieting [in the context of the mind].
Padmasana	Sitting	Yoga pose
Puraka	inhalation	Inhalation of breath (Feurustein, 1996).
purusha	Full, whole	This means the transcendental self, spirit, or pure awareness (*cit*), as opposed to the finite personality (*jiva*) (Dasgupta, 2013; Feuerstein, 1996).
Prakriti	Creatix	"This means the nature, which is insentient, consists of an eternal, transcendental ground (called *pradhana*) and various levels of subtle (*sukshma*) and gross (*sthula*) manifestation. Nature is composed of three types of qualities or forces (*gunas*)" Feuerstein, 1996, p. 20).
Pranayama	Breath Control	This means the careful regulation of the breath, which is the fourth limb of ***Patanjali's*** eightfold path (Feuerstein, 1991; Sengupta, 2012).
Pratyahara	Sense withdrawal	This means withdrawal of sensory inhibition, which is the fifth limb of ***Patanjali's*** 8-limb path (Feuerstein, 1996; Taneja, 2014).

Tamas	Darkness	The principle of inertia, which is one of three primary constitutes (*gunas*) of nature (*prakriti)* (Agarwalla, Seshadri, & Krishnan, 2015; Feuerstein, 1996).
Tapas	Glow or Heat	This term was applied to yoga-like practices that produce heat within the body (Feuerstein, 1996; Feuerstein, 2003).
Rajas	To be excited	The quality or principle of activity, dynamism, which is one of the three primary constituents (*guna*) of nature (*prakriti*) (Dasgupta, 2013; Feuerstein, 1996).
R*ecaka*	exhalation	Exhalation of breath (Feurustein, 1996).
sāmkhya		A school of Hindu philosophy (Feurustein, 1996).
samadhi	Ecstasy	This means ecstasy and free from all ideation (Feuerstein, 1996; Kozasa, Santos, Rueda, Benedito-Silva, De Moraes Ornellas, & Leite, 2008).
samsara	Transmigration	Samsara means the cycle of birth and death (Harada, 2006).
Samtosha	contentment	One of the niyamas (discipline) from the yoga traditions (Feurustein, 1996).
Sattva	Beingness	This means the principle of pure being, which is the highest type of primary constituent (*guna*) of nature (*prakriti)* (Feuerstein, 1996, p. 609; Dasgupta, 2013).
satya	Truthfulness	naked means the ultimate reality and is one of the yamas in *Patanjali's* eightfold path (Feurustein, 1996).
shauca	Consisting of purity	One of the *niyamas* (discipline) from the yoga traditions (Feurustein, 1996).
sramana	Seeker	This means the seeker traditions (6th BCE), from which Jainism arose in ancient India, that focused on ascetic lifestyle and principals (Samuel, 2008).
Svadhyaya	Self-study	One of the *niyamas* (discipline) from the yoga traditions (Feurustein, 1996).
Tapas	Asceticism	One of the *niyamas* (discipline) from the yoga traditions (Feurustein, 1996).
Sutras	Aphorisms	A condensed manual (Feuerstein, 1978).
vritti	Whirl	In Patanjali's yoga sutras, this means one of five modalities of mental activity that must be controlled and includes valid cognition (*pramana*), erroneous (*vikapla*), sleep (*nidra*), and memory (*smriti*) (Feurustein, 1991).
Yamas	Discipline	This means moral ethics and is one of *Patanjali's* yoga sutras (Feuerstein, 1996).

Appendix 2: Lay Summary

Question	Answer
<u>Who are you?</u> *(Personal background; a cultural, ethnic, or personal identity that is important for the reader to understand you)*	My cultural background is that I am Jain. Both my parents are Jain. I am a Jain woman of colour. Jainism is a religion but also a spiritual way of life that I learned as a young child. I am also a feminist, which is a movement to end oppression, sexism, and sexist exploitation but also to seek equality. I am a heterosexual, cisgender woman, and I benefit from heterosexual privilege but also as a single mother and racialized woman. I was born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, my parents were refugees who fled Uganda in 1972, and my mother was forcibly sent to Winnipeg as a teenager to marry my father, a man eleven years older than her. Ironically, he was a man she had only met once at the age of ten years old. It was a marriage of convenience in which her family arranged, one older brother who was married to one elder sister and decided this marriage was a good idea, as the entire family had become refugees. However, this is not the story of my mother; this is my story of being a Jain woman of colour and growing up in a *racist* and *homophobic* Canadian society. It also has to do with the impact of trauma from the racism that they faced and that impacted our entire family network. Broadly, how does trauma that their parents carry from one generation to the next impact children of refugees? Another area I wish the reader to understand as they read why I came to study informed feminist yoga. I want the reader to understand that even when I mention that I see yoga differently than a white person, it is essential to the understanding that is based on my lived experience. Throughout this entire process, I have been confronted with *microaggressions* and *racial intolerance* regarding identifying both feminism and culture to explore my unique experiences of practising yoga in contemporary culture. My research challenges some "feminists" who tend to cling onto yoga spaces and places as the centre of their health and well being, as a place they call their own. Whereas culturally, these become feminist spaces for some feminists to feel safe and gain the benefits of physical (asana) practice. While for others, like myself, yoga spaces are highly triggering of the trauma of racism felt throughout one's lived experiences. Women of colour, face

	microaggressions every day, such as having teachers who are not able to understand their lived experiences. There are memories I have of racist events growing up in Winnipeg that has shaped me and my identity. These include not having a significant role model of colour at all during my education at any point, not being able to speak about my lived experiences in a way that felt safe throughout all my education. Second, I have always had my name mispronounced, misspelt, and my identity as a Canadian citizen has been questioned throughout my life. Third, I am an activist, I have focused my life's work through a social justice lens, volunteering my time in communities that are often neglected such as 2SLGBTTIA, Indigenous, & Feminist health clinic, I also want the reader to know that I am Jain woman of colour, growing up in Winnipeg, I often felt othered when I spoke about the way of life that existed outside my home. We were passionate about our identity before becoming aware of it. Sometimes, when I read bell hooks such as her article, Homeplace: A Site of Resistance, it is often this place that offers me the same feeling of home as a place of resistance for immigrants and refugees. Home offers a different meaning for me in this story.
What are you doing, and why? (*Tell your personal story about what brought you to the field (topic); the theoretical framework and method that I will use in exploring this field; and what I hope to accomplish with this project).*	I want to understand my lived experiences as manifested through my practice as a yogi, for over the past twenty years. The theoretical framework that I will be using is a decolonizing approach that focuses on global decolonization. Global decolonization is the instability of the post-colonial **political** systems, which entails another, far-reaching consequences. These include deep economic problems, inhibiting growth and widening disparities between the northern and southern part of the globe. In exploring my two research questions, First, I will explore the meaning of informed feminist yoga for me, in contemporary culture. Second, I will explore the meaning of feminist informed yoga for magianzlied mothers.
How did you choose your site/occasion? *(I am disclosing how I came to this topic, site, and occasion).*	I was brought to the field of yoga to understand my lived experiences; a method I will explore is reading *Patanjali's* yoga sutras and understanding the text. For my first research question, I was brought to study yoga was the deeply racist feelings in yoga studios culture based on white supremacy. Furthermore, the sexism embedded in yoga culture includes the objectification of women through body image, obsession with diet culture all given with the context of anorexia bulimia.

	Women throughout history have been particularly impacted by the male gaze in harmful ways. I believed growing up that yoga was the root of my cultural identity, people are still resistant to me sharing about my yoga as a lived experience and why there is such a need for a non-Jain woman of colour yoga teachers to distance themselves from the yoga of eastern ways of life. Why is their Namaste different than my Namaste? Not to mention why they have to fake an Indian accent when speaking yoga poses and then if you mention anything negative about their teaching of yoga as cultural appropriation or spiritual materialism they basically start screaming at you or get super defensive as though their profession as a yoga teacher is the only way in which it should be practised and to suggest otherwise makes me an idiot. I struggled for a long time against internalized racism when in yoga spaces, but the microaggressions felt even worse when I began writing and reading about yoga for my doctorate. My cultural identity is deeply tied to yoga spaces and places partly because there are so few spaces and places where Jain women of colour are actually recognized as people. I was drawn to the idea of motherhood because throughout my life as I had a refugee mother, a woman who was in a difficult place in life, as a teenage bride. Over the past few years, I have been focused on the academic experiences documented by marginalized mothers in particular indigenous mothers, black mothers, Lesbian mothers, and single mothers, in particular, a woman of colour single mothers like myself.
How did you choose your site/occasion? *(I am disclosing how I came to this topic, site, and occasion).*	I will journal, meditate, and read for a certain period of time per day. This will contribute to research question 1 and 2.
What will be the results of your project? *(Describe the form of stories, information and experiences you gather will take, how will this information be shared and the anticipated audience of this information)*	Their stories will be presented in a journal format for audiences. This might be turned into a book
What will be the results of your project? *(Describe the form of stories, information and experiences you gather*	The story will take shape in an analytical form. It will be written in the form of experiences and information. I will gather it through reading more and more about the topic of feminist-informed yoga and its various components.

will take, how will this information be shared and the anticipated audience of this information)	I anticipate this audience of this information will be feminist scholars, working in social justice, critical race studies, and critical public health. I also anticipate the audience of this information will be the public like yoga teachers, yoga practioners.