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DECOLONISING FEMINISM IN CLASS
An autoethnography of a Bangladeshi feminist woman
Sharin Shajahan Naomi

Introduction
I came to know about decolonial feminism and decolonialisation of knowledge while doing my PhD. My thesis on feminism and Tibetan Buddhism was inspired by decolonial thoughts and written as a contribution to the decolonisation of knowledge. Definitely I never meant to create another binary and anti-Western category. I voiced for anti-colonial, non-binary and inbetween approaches to create alternative pathways for knowledge. When I started to teach feminism in university, I noticed that feminist discourse was not beyond the risk of colonial, racist and capitalist aggression. Decolonial feminism became an inspiration for me to teach feminism. As an emerging theoretical concept by Lugones (2008, 2010), decolonial feminism empowers the silenced voices of women from the Global South as well as indigenous groups and immigrant and black communities so that they can become agents in the production of the knowledge that is about them. Decolonial feminist theory is grounded on postcolonialism, postcolonial feminism, and decolonising knowledge to develop rigorous critique of Western knowledge and representation of non-Western categories in feminism. It aims towards breaking the hierarchy of white Western supremacy in interpreting women’s experience and bring equality between different perspectives. Autoethnography, which is a research method for connecting personal to political aspects of experience, has a similar purpose in terms of resisting colonial knowledge. From my experience of writing a PhD thesis as an autoethnography, I found that autoethnography can make decolonial feminism contextualised and localised. This is a requirement for its growth and expansion in feminist discourse.

In this autoethnography, I share my experience of decolonising feminism for my female university students. This will illuminate what decolonial feminism means in teaching and what it looks like. My experience as a Bangladeshi woman who struggled against patriarchy, extremism and colonialism has shaped my teaching for the class. I also invoked a meaningful allyship with the West while resisting colonial and capitalist influence in feminism. My subjectivity in teaching “emerges as one comes to understand how structures of domination work in one’s life, as one develops critical thinking and critical consciousness, as one invents new, and alternative habits of being” (hooks, 1990, p. 15). Instead of holding fast to a fixed and categorised
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Decolonising feminism presents the possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender (Lugones, 2010, p. 747). Lugones (2010) presented decolonial feminism as resistance against coloniality of power within feminism. This power is the oppressive power of a capitalist world system of power and West-centered modernity. Modernity here indicates the attempts to control, by denying the existence of other worlds with different ontological presuppositions other than a particular category set up by Western discourse (Lugones, 2010, p. 749). Modernity appears when Europe affirms itself as the “center” of a World History that it inaugurates; the “periphery” that surrounds this center is consequently part of its self-definition (Dussel, 1995). Decolonial feminism should not be used as a premodern category. It is certainly aware of positive sides of modernity. But it is concerned about the darker sides of modernity that is constituted by colonial relation. Decolonial feminist tasks begin by seeing the colonial difference between West and others, and emphatically resisting the epistemological habit of erasing the difference (Lugones, 2010, p.753). It decenters the Euro-American dominant position in feminist discourse, and emphasises contextual understanding and local and indigenous epistemologies as part of feminist politics. A critique of the complex system of colonialisation, capitalisms and heterosexualism and patriarchy are the heart of this practice.

Discourse on decolonising feminism for teaching purpose dwells on the politics of knowledge, challenging individualistic and Eurocentric aspects of feminism, finding diverse voices, and the critique of new liberal education institutions (Jong et al., 2018). Studies show that higher education institutions in the United States normalises colonial legacies of racism, sexism and classism in the classroom through curriculum, teaching and supremacy of white academics (Davis, 2010; Kuokkanen, 2007; Museus et al., 2015). Here students are taught to reproduce colonial legacies when approaching any problem. It was found that a colonial approach through curriculum and teaching could make the students of colour feel alienated and disconnected from the teaching (Davis, 2010). Decolonisation of feminism for the classroom aims to address this disconnection, the dominance of white colonial epistemologies and the absence of voice of non-Western and non-white women. Decolonial feminism can become an organic process to let the students identify the colonial approaches in knowledge. It can be an instrument for claiming epistemic authority of non-Western and non-white women and including non-Western scholars and their perspectives in the course materials.

However, my observation finds that decolonial feminism in teaching or in academia needs more situatedness. Since its origin was in a Latin American context, the oppressive structure under its framework could not go beyond racial, colonial, and capitalist aspects. More localisation and contextualisation will enrich decolonial feminism in terms of identifying layers of oppressive structure against gender equality, such as religious extremism, new forms conservatism and national politics. In this regard, autoethnography could be a starting point to invoke the situatedness of decolonial feminism in a particular context and in particular experiences.

Since the emergence of postmodernism, autoethnography represents a new location and space for the voice, language and narrative of the marginalised voices (Holt, 2003; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003)). In autoethnography, a researcher analyses his or her experience to address
the main themes of research (Ellis et al., 2011). Autoethnography shares a common purpose with decolonial feminism in challenging the coloniality of knowledge. The superiority of the Eurocentric perspective and the representation of others are at the heart of Western colonial ways of producing knowledge (Mignolo, 2009; Said, 1979). This colonial discourse is often referred to as authoritative efforts for maintaining European intellectual lineages, styles and narratives rooted in Greek and Roman classical ways, and later in the cult of the Enlightenment thinkers like Descartes and Kant (Mignolo, 2009). The intention behind this authoritarian approach to knowledge is to exclude others in the name of non-scientific knowledge. Besides critique from post-colonial scholars, Western discourse has also been subject to feminist critique due to its rigid characteristics and disconnection with spontaneous experience, emotions, real life’s language and communication (Metta, 2015). Difficulties with speaking in a colonial discourse is felt deeply by non-white third world women who are depicted as victims in the Western discourse (Spivak, 1988). In this constrained space, autoethnography provides an opportunity to speak from multiplicity, heterogeneity, plurality, and indeterminacy of meaning (Bordo, 1990; Tsalach, 2013). This methodology can form a resistance against binary ways of thinking and speaking under colonial discourse. Autoethnography can be a useful way to enter into large areas of social and political context through cultivating knowledge of a woman’s experiences (Heyer-Gray, 2001; Smith, 1992). As a research method, autoethnography can unpack the crisis of representation of this time, the complexities of “the interpretation of embodied and intersubjective knowledge” and multiple aspects of consciousness and self-consciousness that are personally and/or politically emancipatory (Ellis, 2002, p. 402).

Choosing autoethnography as the research method inevitably brings some apprehensions regarding its credibility and validity. However, qualitative inquiry in social science and humanities has experienced a paradigm shift in the last 25 years through applying innovative research methods for questioning the positivist aspect of knowledge based on objectivity and scientific rationality (Taylor & Wallace, 2007). In this changing process, the claim of truth and validity has become partial, localised, and situated (Adams et al., 2015; Beer, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Holt, 2003; Spry, 2011). Writing autoethnography to further this goal is neither an innocent eclecticism nor without consideration of justice (King, 2006).

Autoethnography can aptly capture politics of knowledge that decolonial feminism would like to explore as a part of resistance against colonial discourse. In decolonial feminism’s quest for voice of others and non-Western epistemologies, autoethnography’s role can be extremely supportive. In this chapter, by using autoethnography, I aim to situate decolonial feminism in the context of my personal experience as well as that of my teaching. I further aim to particularity and individuality link my ideas with local and global politics. In an autoethnographic voice, I will narrate my upbringing and my orientation to the Western liberal model of feminism and later my interest in the post-colonial feminist approach. There has been an inbetweenness in my life in terms of embodying Western liberal feminist ideas and post-colonial feminist strategies. This inbetweenness was reflected in teaching decolonial feminism and connecting personal journeys and realisations to the teaching. Here decolonial feminism becomes an organic process, an integration of feminism with bricolage feminist perspectives. I use this term to denote a special feature. Bricolage originates from a traditional French expression “bricoleur” that refers to craftspeople who can use materials left over from other projects to construct new artifacts or “bricolage” (Kincheloe, 2001; Rogers, 2012). Their style is different from the engineers who resorted to set procedures and a list of specific tools to complete their works. Through the stories of my life and class, I would like to show that in bricolage feminist perspectives, there remains no singular aspect or fixed feminist school of thought. The paths of these feminist perspectives are unfolded according to demands of
time, space and fluid subjectivity. Its dynamic and changing nature reminds us of the nature of real-life feminism. In my autoethnography, decolonial feminism stands with these bricolage perspectives with a purpose to show the organic manifestation of decolonial feminism in an interwoven space of classroom and lives.

**My life and teaching: decolonial feminism unfolds**

My parents have been extremely liberal in terms of allowing their daughter to grow up as an independent career woman in a country like Bangladesh where women’s traditional roles are customarily more celebrated and respected than any professional and academic achievements. My father had encouraged me to read books and newspapers on world politics since class six and my mother motivated me to be a woman who would prioritise career and education above everything. However, just like other Bangladeshi parents in general, they expected to see their daughter to fit in to society, marry and appear to be a good woman in the eyes of the community. In my childhood, I spend four years in Afghanistan during the Nazibullah government’s regime. Memories of that era and the relatively free lifestyle of the pre-Taliban regime are still fresh in my memory. When the Taliban took power for the first time in the 1990s and began the brutal oppression of women, I was in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Even though I was living far away from Afghanistan, as a woman I experienced a great terror. During that time, I felt strongly that my rights were not guaranteed in a third world country, as they could be sold or compromised in the name of religion and peace at any time. My fear escalated daily as I grew older and encountered increasing restrictions from family, society and schools. Those restrictions were reactions to the fear of lack of security and losing the image of a good girl in the community. I had little choice with regard to clothing style, lifestyle and even conversing about different topics. There were unwritten laws for women. Every woman from the middle class would know and maintain these laws. At some point, I developed a disgust for any societal and cultural norms related to gender. Sometimes, I would lose control and engaged in a heated debate with my relatives and friends. That gave me nothing but the title of an arrogant woman. My reaction was to develop a deep inclination for a Western lifestyle. While studying law, I felt extremely connected to liberal and radical feminism without any critique.

After completing a bachelor’s degree in law, I started professional life as a researcher for a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that worked for women at the grassroots level in Bangladesh. That job opened a new journey for me through personal, financial and social independence. I had the opportunity to travel to many areas of Bangladesh that I had never visited before. Many of my friends were not allowed to have the privilege of travelling without parents or family members, even for professional purposes. As part of my field trips, I encountered the plight, struggle and dis-empowerment of rural women. I realised that I was confined in a Western liberal model of understanding women’s agency, choice, and independence. Instead of analysing women’s choice and agency through the dichotomous eyes of active/passive, independent/dependent, empowered/victim, I noticed how women’s choice, agency and freedom mediated the existing cultural norms, values, relations and desire (Niyogi, 2011; Pande, 2015). In this regard, the relationship between active/passive, domination/oppression and choice became blurred and complex (Niyogi, 2011).

My immense interest to study abroad and taste Western freedom took me to Australia to complete a master’s degree under the Australian Leadership Award. Initially I became highly excited and delighted to be myself, to wear whatever I wanted, and to talk openly without being afraid. Those good days lasted only 18 months! After completing my master’s, I had to return to Bangladesh in order to meet the conditions of the scholarship. After returning,
I suddenly found myself to be in an alien place with a strange feeling of non-belongingness to my culture and community. Not only that, but I also started to adopt strange strategies to avoid attention in roads, which I never did before. For example, I started to cover my head while going out. I did not use a Hijab or veil. Instead, I covered my head with the same scarf with which we were supposed to use to cover our chest. There are some unwritten codes for evaluating women’s modesty in the community in Bangladesh (Azim, 2010; Jasim Uddin, 2015; Khan, 2014). These include maintaining a good woman’s image in the public and private spheres (e.g. not to argue with men and elders, not to have a loud voice while giving an individual opinion) and covering certain sensitive parts of the body (such as legs and breasts). “Purdah” is considered to be an expression of a high level of modesty, which is mostly practiced by covering the head and the chest. However, a Hijab is not a part of cultural codes of modesty, although in recent years the practice of Hijab wearing has been increased. Covering my head gave me lots of comfort and confidence to use public spaces. Covering my head also uplifted my status and credibility in my family and community. I pondered on the fragility of polarising the categories of active/passive or freedom of choice in an unconditional manner. I became aware of conditions, depth, levels, extents and fluctuations of these categories. My subjectivity under the postcolonial feminist approach could be considered as an inbetweenness of a female subject who negotiated with power for a strategic purpose (Gordan and Almutairi Areej, 2013). While white Western liberal feminism would judge my subjectivity as docile and submissive, a postcolonial feminist approach would consider it as a strategy or negotiation that decentered humanist notions of autonomy and reason. My strategic negotiation was temporary and fluid, and it vehemently challenged the fixed binary ways of thinking. Under Western intellectual knowledge, negotiation, compromise and compliance are constructed in opposition to “resistance”. For a Bangladeshi woman like me, however, negotiation can be very strategic if it is based on achieving certain goals that I desire. Obioma Nnaemeka has seen this negotiation as an exchange, a give and take with the opposition force and structure, a kind of strategic adaptability for gradual change in the long run (Nnaemeka, 2003). This phase of life, along with my doctoral work on decolonial knowledge and post-colonial feminism, had a profound influence on my venture for decolonising feminism when I began an academic job. 

I purposefully lived an invisible life for one and a half years. I then received a scholarship to study a PhD in Australia and I was more than happy to return to that country. But soon I fell into the despair of loneliness and financial struggle. Although I was surrounded by extremely kind and supportive people and happy to practise long hours of meditation, I began to feel tired. I realised freedom was conditional, even in the West. An illusion of having complete freedom collapsed. However, as a woman from the third world, freedom was more conditional to me than it was, for example, for white men and white women from the upper class. While writing an autoethnography for my PhD thesis, these issues were inevitably addressed. I found the Western liberal feminist discourse to be inadequate in critically analysing categories such as ‘freedom’ and ‘agency’ in the non-Western context and life. My PhD thesis became a resistance against Western colonial discourse and a voice for decolonising knowledge and epistemologies. After three and a half years, I had to return home from Australia. By that time, I realised that to the West, I am the other. To my community, by contrast, I had to fit in. After completing my PhD, I started my first academic job at an international women’s university in Bangladesh. Female students from 19 different countries of Asia were studying here. Suddenly, life changed drastically. This university’s multicultural environment made me feel at home. I began to wear Western clothes again, without having any fear of being judged. This time, I also included
sharee (traditional Bengali dress) among my favorite attire. This phase was certainly unlike the one when I was covering head. My choice changed, depending on the circumstances. I loved teaching young feminist students who were very passionate to do something for the country and the world. I found a cause to live with contentment.

Still my uprootedness made me feel that the longing of a Bangladeshi woman to connect with family and community cannot be ignored in the journey for empowerment and independence. This longing will be always there no matter how patriarchal the society and family appear. The Western model of individual feminism was useful, but it was to some extent illusionary in my life. A non-Western/Bangladeshi woman such as myself cannot live like a Western woman in her country even if she wants to do so. The surroundings will always make her feel alienated. There are so many paradoxes, contradictions, negotiations and compromises that I need to do which mean that my story cannot be read and understood from liberal Western binary models of thoughts. As an educator, my class lectures spontaneously started to address the post-colonial parts of feminist analysis and decolonisation of knowledge while talking about women’s real-life experience in a non-Western context. I found that students loved embodied teaching rather than abstract theoretical lecture. They could connect with my feelings from their contexts and experience.

I began to notice that young students from different parts of Asia were unaware of colonial difference in knowledge. Just as I had been overwhelmed with white feminist discourse and lifestyle in my university days, they too, were having the same illusion. While I was teaching feminist history, I realised that white women’s supremacy was celebrated through considering the suffrage movement to be the first feminist movement in modern history. Rafia Zakaria has been critical about how white women tend to make themselves the first stars of feminist activism through the celebration of suffrage (Zakaria, 2021). Although I don’t accept Zakaria’s opinions on a binary non-white feminism, her view on some topics, such as suffrage and white women supremacy, were no exaggeration. I included black feminist suffragists and their views in the lecture and taught early-phase feminism with a critical awareness on race and class. In my teaching on first-wave feminism, I included both early liberal Western feminists and some women figures from history of South Asia who challenged gender stereotyping in that society. For instance, Queen Kalindi Rani was the only female leader and was the 46th ruler of the Chakma Circle (an indigenous group in Bangladesh). She ruled from 1832 to 1873. Whilst speaking about her to my class, I heard an indigenous girl’s excited voice: “I know her and heard her story.” When I included Begum Rokeya Sakhvat Hossain as one of the early feminists on the Indian subcontinent, girls demonstrated extraordinary interests on the topic. Her life shows that it is possible to be a feminist in the community and in connection with family. Feminism, family, marriage and community need not be in an oppositional relationship for empowering women. She was considered to be radical in her time. Her strategic methods of female liberation made sense to many girls in the class.

I was looking for easy readings for the students. One American academic advised me to include books by bell hooks as primary readings for feminism. I included her book Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics as one of the core texts for the class (hooks, 2000). Besides Rosemary Tong’s work, her books became mandatory reading for the class. Students loved them. Her radical, yet simple style of writing generated more interest in feminism. Their vision to change the society became more intersectional and strategic in nature.

Owing to the students’ growing interest, I included discussion of recent cases of women rights every week. My students’ duty was to find out news about women’s issues from the newspaper and discuss it in the class. For research, I choose topics such as inheritance rights and
purdah (the wearing of the veil). As a result, there was an engaging and enthusiastic debate on women’s choice in terms of having equal inheritance rights and wearing the veil. I suggested to them that they should have more deconstructive approaches to understand women’s narratives, appreciate multiple perspectives and not reduce the complexities of choice to a linear narrative or binary thoughts. Some students said that they understood why women would negotiate with family and culture through giving up property rights so that she could receive the support of the brothers in return; or why a woman would accept their family’s decision for her to wear the veil so that she could have the permission to go out. We never accepted these aspects as a general picture, an idealised circumstance or a counter grand narrative. Rather, we aimed to find more heterogeneity in these issues. While choosing feminist literatures on complexities of choice, I always emphasised the contexts from where these works originated. For example, feminist works on Muslim women’s agency on the veil. Some feminist works like the one by Saba Mahmood where Muslim women’s agency was reconfigured and identified in choosing the veil was based on a particular context and time of Egypt (Mahmood, 2005). These types of works should be examined with an awareness of localized aspect of knowledge and time. While bringing post-colonial feminist works onto the reading list, I always discussed their situatedness so that these ideas would not become instruments for legitimising oppression in the name of culture and religion. I never intended to establish anti-white feminism, or a feminism that compromised for no strategic purpose, or remained apologetic with regard to some violations by cultural and religious norms or highly selective in raising voice against violence.

Stories from Afghanistan, Malala Yusufzai and Shirin Ebadi were parts of our conversation. I included biographies of Malala Yusufzai and Shirin Ebadi that were about their struggle, events of raising voice against extremist and conservative group’s oppression of women’s basic rights and sacrifice that they had to do for being vocal for women rights (Ebadi, 2006, Yusufzai, 2019). Students from Afghanistan narrated their stories of fear of being attacked by Taliban for having higher study and how they struggled just to pursue study in remote areas of Afghanistan.1

One of the reasons for including these stories was my increasing concern about the rise of religion-based nationalism and the popular intellectual discourse in Bangladesh and other countries. From women’s clothing style to international politics, everywhere that trend became evident and aggressive. In this context, I felt that talking about only colonialism without identifying patriarchal structure within cultural and religious premise might create a disconnection from the ground reality of third world women’s experience of oppression. The oppressive structure in our feminist space of classroom became multilayered – ranging from patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and racism to religious extremism and narrow nationalism. A big part of my past experience was to value healthy and non-oppressive allyship with the West. Love, connection and mutual understanding became a driving force to understand this allyship. My teaching reflected an articulation of the relationship between third world women and white western women.

To make classroom experience more interesting, I introduced some creative and therapeutic activities. These activities included teaching meditation to students, talking about mental health issues and adding performance as a part of class presentation. These activities made students more engaged in the class. One of the examples of these activities was student’s dramas on early feminist lives that transformed the class environment and we felt very connected and grateful to early feminists from both West and East. Many students who initially showed little interest in theories performed very well in these creative projects and this also resulted in a growing interest in theories.
When we were about to start our new fall semester online, the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan. A good number of our students were from Afghanistan. I was terrified to see this regime change. My adolescent trauma about the Taliban regime in Afghanistan returned. I found my Afghan students to be extremely scared about losing the few rights that they had before the Taliban regime. I was alarmed to see that many people, especially men, were supporting the Taliban on Facebook in the name of religion or the anti-colonial spirit. In my Facebook, I kept posting about how the Taliban regime was not in favour of women rights. To my astonishment, few male Facebook friends appeared upset with me. I was shocked to see the apologetic intellectual discourse on the Taliban regime in some countries. I identified how religious orthodoxy was overtaking national discourse in some countries. Clearly Afghanistan issues cannot be analysed without postcolonial insights. But the poor situation of women under the Taliban regime and the support for that regime on Facebook had an enormous impact on me. I found myself talking about the international standard of women’s rights discourse more than ever. To me, I appeared like Phyllis Chesler who, after her captive experience in Afghanistan, refused to be ‘multiculturally correct’ and to turn a blind eye to national patriarchal politics (Chesler, 2006). I was very disheartened to witness the Taliban regime, with their extremely restricted views on women’s rights. I disagreed with the huge support for their regime in social media with a religion based anti-colonial logic. I had no spirit left to find academic pleasure in the post-colonial debate on third world women’s subjectivity and agency on issues such as the veil, marriage and compliance with some cultural norms. This debate might be useful for women fighting for rights to wear Hijabs in France or women who are fighting against Islamophobia in the Western countries. But this debate is irrelevant to a girl who has to leave the country due to threats of honour killing and murder by extremists. This debate does not make sense to a girl in Afghanistan who will be forced to marry an older man who will assure her safety and security in a hostile war-torn country. This debate has nothing to offer to women who had to run to the shops in Kabul whilst wearing a Burkha in order to make themselves invisible so that Talibans would not beat them publicly. I wonder why post-colonial feminism and decolonial feminism has so few works that condemn this type of oppression! The return of Talibans and the huge support level of support for them from some people in the guise of religious-based anti-colonial logic made me aware of the limitations of post-colonial feminism and decolonial feminism in connecting international women’s rights law with national patriarchal politics. Decolonial feminism should not be silent about how patriarchy at the national level works in the same way coloniality works to oppress women of colour. Sometimes patriarchy from local culture can be much more violent. Decolonial feminism needs to accept and acknowledge this situation in their politics of resistance. Post-colonial feminists and feminists with decolonial philosophies need to condemn religious extremism and new forms of religion-based conservatism in national patriarchal politics with equal emphasis – like they do to colonial power, capitalism and racism. After the fall of Kabul, Afghan women’s reasonable fear of losing rights, and support for the Taliban regime from different groups and individuals in the name of anti-colonial logic, made me think of conducting a critical reexamination of post-colonial feminism. In the coming days, I would like to link national patriarchal politics with colonial power play and emphasise the value of an international women’s rights domain in ascertaining a situation. In a world which is leading towards increasing polarisation and unpredictability, decolonial feminism needs to be fluid and accommodative enough to take into consideration the needs of different circumstances. In its thresholds, not only does liberal feminism need to be critiqued for white supremacy, but also post-colonial feminism needs to be reevaluated in terms of its significance to certain contexts.
Conclusion

My discussions of decolonial feminism in my class were a reflection of my life – a navigation among terrains of Western liberal and post-colonial feminist thoughts. Their relationship remains non-binary and complex. This is more like “doing” a feminism where I and my students reinvented the meaning of feminism according to the needs of particular contexts. I have seen it as a bricolaged decolonial feminism where we collect different parts of feminist ideas and weave it with contexts and situatedness to make something new from the older parts. This is a process where changing social realities make classrooms dynamic, interactive and contextually located spaces for learning and teaching (Hill, 2014). My decolonial strategies for teaching feminism challenged the Western category of modernity and colonial hierarchy within feminism. It decentered a binary model of categorisation and universality in understanding women’s issues. It reclaimed epistemic authority of non-Western ‘other’. However, this process was done with awareness of its potentials and challenges. It was not meant for advocating for premodern practice or legitimising cultural and religious oppressive practice. Our decolonial feminism was more about connection with our situated selves and the situated selves of other women in the similar contexts. Just like the lives of women in the third world, our decolonial feminism has been vulnerable, fluid, changing, resistant and resilient. We developed a decolonial feminism that is keen to know its capacities and self-critical. My students and I realised that this self-critical practice is required for the further growth of decolonial feminism and making it a home for diverse voices.

Note

1 These are the events that happened before the Taliban took over Afghanistan in 2021. The Taliban were active in Afghanistan before this formal regime change and attacking women who were studying and working.

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