

Received: December 2023 Accepted: January 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58262/ks.v12i2.225>

Post-Colonial Feminism in International Relations and the Decolonization of Indian Women

Mohanad Hazim Hakkoosh¹, Taherah Makki Abdulkareem², Marwah Firas Abdullah Al-Rawe³

Abstract

This research article aims to address a post-colonial approach to Feminism, using the case of gang rape by Jyoti Singh as an illustrator. Through the study of the existing literature on post-colonialism and the premises of Feminism in International Relations, we seek to question whether the universality of oppressions defended by the majority thought of Western Feminism fits non-Western women. In order to understand the motivations of the increasingly recurrent cases of brutal rape in the Asian country, we seek to show examples that justify the premise that a western thought-settling contact can inhibit the strengthening of Indian initiatives to overcome problems that they concern gender, just as they reiterate the need for a critical rescue of India's pre-colonial societies for the decolonization of Feminism. It is inferred, therefore, that the claim to solve the problems that afflict genders in India must pay attention not to be Universalist, ethnocentric and colonizing like Classical Feminism. The case of rape by Jyoti Singh reiterates the need for the voices of these women to be heard and their experiences to be praised in a way that does not create new absolute truths, but that it creates possibilities for healthy dialogue between different feminist experiences, both Western and eastern.

Keywords: *Post-Colonial Feminism; Jyoti Sing; Decolonization, International Relations; India.*

1.0 Introduction

The process of decolonization of feminism or feminisms implies an involvement in and with the worlds of subalternised subjects-women, a recognition of their cultural logics, and at least the willingness to think about a different relationship between what is human and what is not human. A predisposition to perform pachakuti³¹ as part of the feminist struggle. It is not an attempt to recover static roots and authenticated in their purity, but to update different ways of being and being in the world, in order to reduce the instituting force that the capitalist fact inflicts on our present daily life.

On December 16, 2012, 23-year-old Jyoti Singh, upon returning with a friend from a cinema in the Indian capital of New Delhi, was raped and raped by an iron rod by six men on a public bus (Wikipedia). The case that shocked Indian society for its content of cruelty, sparked a series of protests in the capital and significantly influenced the increase in reports of cases of sexual violence against women in the country. In that same year, India received the classification of “one of the worst countries to be a woman” among the richest economies in the world, according to a survey carried out by the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

¹ Department of Scholarships and Cultural Relations University of Anbar, Iraq, Email: mohanad85@uoanbar.edu.iq

² Department of scholarships and Cultural Relations, University of Information Technology and Communications, Iraq
Email: taherah.m@uoitc.edu.iq

³ Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Anbar, Iraq, Email: marwa.feras@uoanbar.edu.iq

Using Postcolonial Feminism and its critical position in relation to Western feminist academic productions, we seek to explain the power of influence that Western academic knowledge holds in relation to non-Western women. It also seeks to understand the problems generated by a prominent theoretical framework and its colonizing power. More specifically, it is about deconstructing the dominant idea that there is a universal patriarchal gender issue, defended in Western feminist studies and, thus, observing the feminist theoretical foundations in International Relations and its implications for political practice within India.

The research is developed around two major themes. The first deals with feminist academic productions in International Relations and their literature regarding third world women, especially Indian women. It seeks to explain how Western feminist theories can become colonizers in relation to these women, through an "immutable" and "generalist" problematization of oriental feminine issues. The second concerns the consequences of the naturalization of the Western feminist discourse of International Relations in developing countries without the necessary historical and cultural cuts. Using the case of collective rape by Jyoti Singh as an illustrator, we seek to answer whether these consequences are reflections of the universality of female oppression advocated by Western Feminism, on which gender actions tend to be conceived. Under the assumption that the influence of an immutable Western feminist theory towards Indian societies may aggravate gender issues rather than supply them, the research reiterates the need to understand the criticisms made by Postcolonial feminists in relation to Western women (Mohanty, 1984; Bahri, 2013). In particular, it seeks to justify the increasingly recurrent cases of collective rape in Indian society by understanding the social construction inherent in theoretical approaches and social practices. The main purpose of this work is to explain the approaches of Postcolonial Feminism through the understanding of Indian society and its recurrent cases of collective rape, such as the aforementioned case. In particular, the work aims to analyze the framework of post-colonial feminist approaches within the study of International Relations, as well as to investigate the possibility of analysing gender issues in Western societies, especially Indian society, through this aspect and its critical positioning in relation to the universalization of female oppressions.

The relevance of the work can be considered as irrefutable indispensability, given the growing debate on gender issues in International Relations studies as well as the growing international concern with the situation of the female population in India. We see, then, the need to problematize predetermined rules and conceptions for the achievement of female emancipation in countries like India in Western feminist productions, as is the case with the legalization of abortion or the use of ultrasound technologies to determine gender of unborn children and their connection with the so-called Indian Gender Gap - indirect generator of a series of problems linked to groups of violent idle people -.

The bibliographic research takes place through the reading and writing of the main authors who deal with Postcolonial approaches like Edward Said (2007) going through Poststructuralist considerations presented by Michel Foucault (2004). Going into feminist study's authors such as Simone de Beauvoir (1970) and Virginia Woolf (1992) have analysed premises, as well as the considerations of International Relations Feminism, represented here by J. Ann Tickner and Laura Sjoberg (2013), Fred Halliday (1999) all this based on feminist methodologies and gender studies presented by Narvaz and Koller (2006) and Galtung's (1990) notes on the nature of cultural violence. With regard to Postcolonial Feminism, in itself, the research is based on the productions on subordination by Spivak (2014), as well as the inaugural texts of the approach made by Chandra Talpade Mohant (1984) and Deepika Bahri (2013).

1.2 Post-Colonial and Decolonial Thinking

European countries with greater access to knowledge production were responsible for developing and disseminating a particular version of their history and world history. European knowledge, in this sense, was disseminated as universal knowledge. In other words, the way in which Westerners told their own history and the history of the world - in general - managed to be not only a summary of the main knowledge of the West, but mainly a space for extolling the peculiarities of these countries.

However, as Said (2007) argues, representatives of Western governments such as Arthur James Balfour¹ and Lord Cromer², when studying communities outside the West and when elaborating their versions about them, did not take into account their peculiarities. In this way the oriental was seen and represented as homogeneous, simple and practical. It was these characteristics that ended up shaping the administrations of the western colonies during the 17th and 19th centuries. "Cromer makes no effort to hide that for him the Orientals were always and only the human material that he ruled in the British colonies." (Said, 2007, p.71). The Oriental was studied as a curious fact, a human conglomerate that needed strong management and its humanity was considered irrelevant.

Postcolonial approaches are born precisely with the intention of questioning these hegemonic western knowledge productions and, therefore, to give space to the academic productions made by the individuals of the societies that were once colonies. Postcolonialism argues that the remnants of colonization go beyond the economic or political domination of marginalized societies and penetrate them from these hegemonic academic productions. Hence the conception that Western academic productions have a colonizing power.

2.0 Feminism and Feminisms in International Relations

Post-colonial studies were not the only ones that criticized the classic ways of studying International Relations. Within the discipline, studies aimed at understanding the subject of women were constantly made invisible in return for the growing strengthening of the theme of gender in related areas. The invisibility of issues related to gender occurred since the insertion of the woman subject in International Relations studies, in line with post-colonial studies, on a general basis, criticizes the Westfalian lens used to study global problems. In the classical perspective, the object of international study, the so-called high politics⁶, is far from domestic, low politics⁷, making the study of what is not considered international to the debates of International Relations unfeasible.

The focus on the state, in this way, can be cited as a justification for the difficulty of inserting the feminist study in International Relations. The Westphalian model of understanding the world makes it difficult for the scholar to critically observe because it limits the analysis to a single and not concise description of the functioning of the International System. The criticism also falls on the location of academic productions, a problem that naturalizes the exclusion of issues that permeate the relations between institutions and the nation-state. Fred Halliday (1999) mentions that the difficulty stems, among other reasons, from the selective separation of International Relations from developments in other social sciences, pioneering the insertion of feminist study in their disciplines. According to the author, the authors are enthusiastic importers of production from other countries, and not from other neighboring social sciences.

Historically, these problems have facilitated the obscuration of studies that did not follow the predetermined scope of the discipline, with feminist studies being a clear example of this. The

support of gender research only gains strength from the emergence and strengthening of alternative perspectives, such as the Constructivist theory inaugurated with the publication of the article 'Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics' by Alexander Wendt at the end 1980s. The first feminists who achieved recognition within the discipline created the ground for a reformulation of theories and understanding of global policies. According to J. c Tickner and Laura Sjoberg (2013), they added to the international debate the importance of studying women's experiences for the international system, as well as being able to make visible the issues that concern women.

Feminists criticize, in addition to the classic object of study of the discipline, the terrain of international practice, mostly male. The female presence, even though important for the constitution of the international system itself, was erased due to the male predominance in the fields of International Relations. On the subject, Fred Halliday argues that “[...] the terrain of international practice is itself a special male domain, distant, even, from the norms prevailing in other bodies, distant, including from the norms prevailing in other bodies of formulation of policies”.

The predominantly masculine terrain made it easier for definitions such as rationality, historically associated with the masculine, to be characteristics that defined the states and the study bases of the discipline. As Izadora Monte (2013) rightly states, feminist criticism seeks to understand the connection between the use of these concepts of rationality / irrationality and the relationship between politics, masculinity and femininity. (Monte, 2013).

With the strengthening of approaches that seek more interpretative, ideational and sociological methods to understand global policies - which question who is interested and for what reason knowledge is built - Feminism gains strength to subvert the form of hegemonic research. When analyzing the issues that concern the ‘micro level’ of International Relations, which concern domestic and individual issues, they seek to understand how marginal individualities affect and are affected by international policies. (Tickner and Sjoberg, 2013), Feminist approaches seek to answer, then, how gender issues play, or could play a role in international relations and in International Relations, as well as to analyze how asymmetries in relationships occur between genders in international processes through the institutions and norms of the international system and gender specific problems (Monte, 2013).

The classical theories of International Relations rely on the assertion that self-dependent states play a role of rationality in their relations with other states. The international system is, like Machiavelli, anarchic and rational, insofar as it praises the masculine characteristics or the 'VIRTU', characteristics of the western model of masculinity based on aggression, competitiveness and affirmation of autonomy (Monte, 2010). Positivist theories build, then, the image of the strongest states as masculine and the weakest as feminine, in view of the historical characterization of the feminine being as irrational being. The overflow of hierarchies that define gender for issues beyond individuality, such as the valuation of the rational state (male) as strong and the others as irrational / savage (female), is also a concern of international relations feminists. Regarding this, Isabela Monte reflects that,

When we understand that the differentiation between male and female is not just an individual characteristic, but a set of norms and meanings that permeates individuals, at the same time that it offers these elements for the construction of their identities, we can understand gender as a category also present in speeches and institutions, and at different levels of social life, including at the international level (Monte, 2013, p. 69).

According to Ann Tickner and Laura Sjoberg (2013) feminists also share the post-positivist understanding that there is a relationship between the possession of knowledge and power. Foucault's (2004) reflection, also shared with post-colonial approaches, advocates that those who have knowledge and make knowledge legitimize and form what we mean by truth. Feminism, then, reflects that the knowledge, including knowledge within International Relations, was mostly made by men and concerns men. The fact that women and gender issues do not gain prominence in the great debates in this, and other areas can be cited as one of the problems generated by this lack of representation in academic productions. In relation to this Simone de Beauvoir (1970) says:

In addition to the concrete powers they possess, they have a prestige whose tradition the education of the child maintains: the present involves the past and, in the past, the whole history was made by men. At the moment when women begin to take part in shaping the world, that world is still a world that belongs to men (Beauvoir, 1970, p. 15).

Therefore, international feminist criticism studies the construction of gender hierarchies in the International System, such as the praising of states as rationally masculine or the erasure of issues of lowpolitics that directly affect women through the production of knowledge. According to Izadora Monte (2013), the understanding that norms and institutions are responsible for the identities of the world we live in is necessary to justify that there are other ways of seeing the International System. One is through feminist lenses.

Certain norms and institutions are responsible for the ways in which we are socialized in gender hierarchies, how we internalize cultural assumptions and define them as part of our identities. The social control that guarantees this internalization is done by the family, by the laws, by the market, by physical coercion and, also, by the organization of the international system. (Monte, 2013, p. 70)

With regard to the criticism of the focus of Classic International Relations studies - such as the relations between states and the focus on the Nation State - the first feminists sought to rethink certain characteristics of the State that directly affected their relationship with other states. Nationalism, as a strong feature that defines their identities, was criticized for delimiting the roles and places of women within nations. As Halliday (1999) states, nationalist movements "reinforce compliance with values that are often defined by men and make it possible to delegitimize alternative policies on the grounds that they are foreign [policies].".

2.1 Post-Colonial Feminism

In line with the origin of most feminist strands, Postcolonial Feminism is born out of women's unrest. Post-positivist feminists raise doubts regarding the importance of building a 'fixed and determined list of structural causes for the oppression of women' (Monte, 2013, p. 75), in particular, they are concerned with the universalization of these ideas without the necessary cultural adaptations.

Postcolonial feminists - who are mostly third worlds - do not feel represented by the universalization of oppression and are concerned with the colonizing factor in the academic productions of Western Feminisms. The criticism of classical feminists to the academic mainstream, despite being based on the idea that academic productions are mostly made by men and for men (Tickner, 2013), does not question the feminist academic production itself with the same precision. The criticism formulated by Postcolonial Feminism, therefore, falls on the problematization of the majority presence of white and Western women in their

academic productions and, particularly, postcolonial feminists seek to understand how the lack of this representation affects the lives of black, Indian women, colonized or oriental.

Although there is currently a greater opening to the recognition of approaches that are said to be critical to classical academic production as Spivak (2014) states, the place of the academic producer remains the same, linked to a belief that the place of the researcher should not be questioned - even in approaches considered critical, such as Feminism. Rescuing the post-colonialism thermologies, post-colonial feminists are concerned with the colonizing factor of these productions or, using the terminology of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006), they are concerned with the fact that this may be a thought of Abyss, or an Abysmal Feminism. It is in the face of this discomfort and concern that Postcolonial feminists formulate their criticisms.

3.0 Daughters of India: Collective Rape of Jyoti Singh

On December 16, 2012, Jyoti Singh, a physiotherapy student from the Indian capital of New Delhi, was raped, raped and tortured by six men on a bus while returning home with a friend, who was also beaten. A few hours later, according to Krishna Pokharel and Paul Beckett (2013) the couple was evicted from the bus, naked and unconscious along a highway. Both were heavily attacked with an iron rod. Jyoti Singh had been so brutally raped that she died two weeks later, on December 29, of complications from the crime. The case, which shocked Indian society, was responsible for a series of protests in the capital and other parts of India for justice and improvements in the treatment of women in the country.

His death generated a moment of national introspection regarding the threats that women face in India, whether in the streets of the capital or in a distant village, despite the advances of Indian society in relation to the liberalization of society and economic reinvigoration (Pokharel and Beckett, 2013)

Of the six accused, five were convicted of rape, murder, kidnapping and other offenses. The sixth had been sentenced to two years of juvenile detention for being a minor. As Krishna Pokharel and Paul Beckett (2013) affirm, the crime, which took place inside a moving bus, drew the attention of the Indian and International population for its brutality and, in addition, strengthened the image of India's failure to protect its women. In their work "Crimes against women: Three tragedies and the call for reform in India", journalists Krishna Pokharel and Paul Beckett (2013) analyze a series of events that concern the situation of women in modern India, as well as discuss the case of Jyoti Singh. When dealing with the case, among other issues, journalists pay attention to the fact that the relationship between the two friends was a relationship between different social classes, or that they were on different sides in what concerns the caste that each one belonged (POKHAREL and BECKETT, 2013). This survey allows a more in-depth analysis of the situation. Although discrimination by caste is prohibited by the Indian Constitution of 1949, today many of the country's problems are studied based on these parameters, given the peculiar way that this system was built and its continuity in the practical plane (BALDI, 2006). The Hindu caste system divides Indian society through four categories, called varnas, which, according to Hindu tradition, are linked to different parts of the body of Brahma, a creative deity. According to Verônica Daflon (2008) the Brahmins, who are the priests, philosophers and scholars, would have come from the head of the divinity; the Kshatriyas, who are rulers and warriors, would have come from the arms; the Vaishyas, who are traders, of the thighs; and the Shudras, who are workers and peasants, on their feet. According to the author, in addition to these are the Untouchables or Dalits, which are

delegated the occupations considered degrading and impure in Indian society and traditionally cannot share the same temples or spaces as other castes¹³. According to Pokharel and Beckett (2013), Jyoti Sing was of a lower caste than his companion and a marriage between the two became impossible in the face of the economic barriers imposed on their castes. His friend belonged to the Brahmin caste, and the student to the Shudras caste,

In many ways, the young man and his friend were a modern couple, albeit surrounded by caste and tradition. Living far from home, the two were doing their part in expanding the Indian professional class - She was a physiotherapist looking for her first job; him leading a team specialized in voice technology for Internet for corporations. [...] Differences like these work against a union. And the young boy is reluctant to meet his family's wishes for him to find a traditional companion from within his Brahmin community. (POKHAREL and BECKETT, 2013)

In its current constitution, the system remains, however, linked to a hierarchy commonly used during the time of colonization. During the centuries of British domination in India, between the years 1858 and 1947, the constitution of the Indian follows the maxim advocated by Said (2007) that Easterners are defined by Westerners as homogeneous, simple and practical. It was through this classification of the Indian that the caste system was studied and understood by the colonizing productions of the time and today.

Although the caste system comes from Hinduism, and soon an Indian religious tradition prior to colonization, the hierarchical differentiations that concern it were aggravated by the construction of the homogeneous image of the colonized and Indian subject. The simplistic way of explaining India by the West does not allow an understanding of the peculiarities that characterize this caste system¹⁵, since, although the system can be held responsible for Indian problems, there are anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and non-ethnocentric alternatives to solve them (Spivak, 1999). From Western alternatives to the solution of global problems, Marxist and Post-structuralist proposals can be criticized by Postcolonial thought - here characterized as Western or Orientalist.

Regarding the division of classes and the solutions to the problems arising from them, Marxist theory since the first debates occasioned by the publication of the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels, highlights the need for the definitive end of class antagonisms in the definitive installation of socialism. For Marx (apud BARROS, 2011), the current constitution of society as prehistoric can only be overcome with the constitution of history itself. According to the author, this story will only begin with the definitive installation of socialism, which, among other issues, will bring about the end of social classes through a violent overthrow of the social order,

Communists refuse to hide their opinions and intentions. They openly declare that their goals can only be achieved with the violent overthrow of the entire existing social order. That the ruling classes tremble in the face of a communist revolution. In it the proletarians have nothing to lose but their fetters. They have a world to win. Proletarians from all countries, unite! (MARX and ENGELS, 2014, p.68)

A mostly European action aimed at suspending class antagonisms also in non-Western countries is problematized with regard to its applicability in these countries without the necessary cultural cuts, since this may turn out to be a colonizing action. This problematization reaffirms the characterization given by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) that Marxist thought is also an abysmal thought, or colonizer, especially because it ignores the divergent divisions of labor that exist in each country - as is the case with caste in India.

The criticisms made by Spivak (2014) regarding Gilles Deleuze's references to the workers' struggle, come from the same source. The post-structuralist author's understanding that the subjugated classes, or working classes, are engaged with the instinct to destroy the sources of power when faced with situations of oppression, is criticized by the author for not considering the different forms that capitalism globalism and its direct association with colonialism takes over in Eastern societies. "The link with the workers' struggle is located in the desire to end power in any place of its application. This place is apparently based on a simple appreciation of any desire that destroys any power" (Spivak, 2014). When this desire for destruction reaches the Asian continent, or more specifically India, it tends to either make the region invisible or to destroy the peculiarities of these societies, in the case of India, a literature engaged with the disappearance of the castes.

Although these definitions fit in a utopian white European reality, when entering non-Western societies, they become colonizers due to the naivety regarding the peculiarities of these countries. Using the understanding of Galtung (1990), this is a sample of the importance of focusing on violent cultural aspects and not on cultures in their entirety for the study of societies like India.

According to Galtung (1990), a hierarchical caste system had been the source of criticism by Mahatma Gandhi. In a book that deals with various aspects of the life of the Indian leader Gandhi, Galtung (1990) demonstrates that for the founder of the modern Indian state, there were different alternatives for the solution of the problems linked to the system. Gandhi, as an Indian and Indian independence activist under British rule, does not see the extinction of the caste system as a solution to the abuses committed by the upper classes, on the contrary, he seeks to focus on a non-hierarchical caste system where differences are highlighted in a horizontal rather than vertical system of understanding.

For Gandhi, a horizontal structure is a necessary condition for self-realization, as it frees both the explorer and the exploited from the fetters of exploiting structures. [...] Gandhi wanted to purify the caste system, removing the vertical component. He wished to keep the division of labor implicit in the varna (varna) [...] but no one should be ranked above the other. The caste system should be horizontal. Gandhi argued that this was the original system, and what followed was an aberration. (Galtung, 1990, p.71)

In addition to being hierarchical, the Hindu caste system unevenly tastes the genders. Thus, although the arguments offered by Gandhi's studies are pertinent, Postcolonial Feminism also highlights the importance of the specific study of Indian women in this context, given that women suffer from their feminine condition and also from their social condition. (or caste). As defended by Depika Bahri (2006), it is for this reason that the study of colonizing situations should not be separated from the study of hierarchies that refer to women. The case of Jyoti Singh soon becomes an example of the strength of the oppressions that fall on third world women.

The gender hierarchy in India and other colonized countries has become a constant theme in Western feminist academic productions (Mohanty, 1984). Publications on third world women, so to speak, in addition to strengthening the Western argument of categorizing third world women as victims of a culture that is naturally dangerous to women, also reaffirm the abyss and imperialist discourse that Western publications are in demand. With regard to Indian women, linked to the imaginary created in relation to the caste system, and the repercussion of the case of Jyoti Sing, this type of positioning becomes recurrent.

Academic production, while characteristically normative creates universal knowledge that becomes a rule in various world sectors. This normative factor is still legitimized by power relations that strengthen certain productions as a result of others. Western feminist productions, when questioning productions mostly made by men with regard to understanding the international scene, are currently questioned by the marginal productions produced by Postcolonial Feminism regarding the representation of colonized women, in this case Indian women, which was built as homogeneous and detached from its historical, cultural and national context - in ode to the need for critical cycles defended by post-positivist approaches- (Mohanty, 1984).

The importance of studying gender hierarchies in India, in this sense, is due, not to assimilate that the oppressions that concern gender are repeated homogeneously in any society, but by the understanding that the subject Indian woman he is not detached from his surroundings. As Depika Bahri (2006) states, an analysis of gender hierarchies through the Postcolonial feminist perspective calls for an interpretation of the facts taking into account the subject of analysis and the medium he is represented. Understanding that the universality proposed by Western Feminism - where the issues related to women are read as equals and only concern gender hierarchies - and that the origin of academic productions of this aspect are located mainly in the West, is essential for the assimilation of the need of a Feminism that embraces the peculiarities of non-Western women. On the topic Chandra discourses:

I consider that the hypotheses of privilege and ethnocentric universality, on the one hand, and inadequate self-awareness about the effect of Western academic production in the 'Third World' in the context of a Western-dominated world system, on the other, characterize a considerable extent of Western feminist work on third world women. (Mohanty, 1984, p. 335)

As a woman, Indian, colonized and oriental, Jyoti Sing was the victim and protagonist of a structure built to make her invisible. The case of collective rape, in this sense, cannot be understood only in view of the characterization of a patriarchal society, but also in view of the intersection of patriarchy with imperialism, racism and colonialism (Monte, 2013). The intersectionality proposed by Postcolonial Feminism seeks to understand the colonized woman in a plural way, in order to formulate also plural understandings about the issues that appeal to her. Therefore, the analysis made by the researcher also takes place in a plural form, since by ignoring the oppressions that form the construction of Indian women, an important part of what constitutes her identity as a woman is erased and, by extension, made invisible.

3.1 Post-Colonial Feminism: what Look can we take on the Case?

A post-colonial feminist perspective on International Relations focuses on several ways of understanding issues that refer to the woman subject in the international system, given her cultural peculiarities. The anti-nationalist struggle, a topic widely debated by Classical Feminism, and a source of criticism of Postcolonial Feminism, can be exemplified with the problem of rape in Indian society today. The uplifting of Indian culture and its nation, contrary to what is advocated by Krishna Pokharel and Paul Beckett (2013), who believe that the solution to the treatment given to women in India is the cultural reformulation of India, it becomes, on the contrary, a strong way to empower Indian women.

The constitution of 'British India' - a term used to define the time between 1858 and 1947 when India was a colony of England -, following the reasoning of the post-colonial perspective, was one of the ways that colonialism entered into Indian society, however not the only one. The production of knowledge about India in this and in the periods that followed also confirms

the understanding defended by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006) about the production of a knowledge of absolute truths that defined the country in a caricaturous way. We can cite, as an example, the considered increase in Western journalistic publications to portray the recent case of collective rape as a failure by India to protect its women as is the case of the journalistic work "Crimes against women: Three tragedies and the call for reform in India", by journalists Krishna Pokharel and Paul Beckett (2013). The strength of colonialism, therefore, permeates political and economic issues when defining Indian culture as savage or simply making it invisible in the face of its peculiarities. In this sense, as Indians, as a community, they are erased or, as Aimé Cesaire (2006) said, they are relegated to a characteristic of not being or not existing.

As an invisible nation, the truths constructed by Western discourses strengthen the thought that Indian culture is mainly to blame for the problems that they desire (Said, 2007). This characterization falls even more strongly on female beings. Based on Mohanty's (1984) surveys on the intersection of oppression in Indian women, it draws attention to the fact that "besides the [feminist] brotherhood there is still racism, colonialism and imperialism!" (Mohanty, 1984, p. 348), it is understood that the Indian woman, in addition to carrying the weight of gender hierarchies within the original and modern Indian society, unlike western women, does not disengage from her nationality. The definition of her as Indian, although not mentioned by knowledge producers, carries a characterization and subjugation alien to other women (Mohanty, 1984). The same reasoning can also be applied to other issues that appeal to this woman, such as caste or economic situation.

The student's case, in this sense, becomes evidence of the characterization and subjugation of women like Jyoti Singh and, in the same way, of the characterization of distinct Indian women. This evidence occurs for two reasons, the first of which concerns the problem that the girl wanted in relation to her relationship with the friend who accompanied her on the day of the crime. Pokharel and Beckett (2013) states that they were of different castes, and for that reason the relationship between the two became complicated. The great price of the dowry and the prejudices regarding the marriage between different castes can be cited as examples of the problems generated by the hierarchical constitution of the castes, problematized by Gandhi (Galtung, 1990) and re-imagined by the postcolonial Indian Feminism's statements when adding the different intersectional weights of caste oppression for Indian women (Bahri, 2006).

The second reason is due to the investigation of the worldwide repercussion of the case, as well as its reverberations in Indian society together with the uprising of women who took to the streets to protest. In view of the intersectionality proposed by Postcolonial Feminism, a rescue and understanding of Dalit Feminism can exemplify the internal erasure of women also within the Indian reality. As Sowjanya Tamalapakula (2014) argues, women from the Dalit caste - or impure ones - suffer from the problems that Indian women feel even more strongly than women from other castes, as they carry the categorization of women, colonized, oriental, Dalit and poor.

Sexual violence, such as rape and sexual abuse in the public space is a fact in the lives of Dalit women, [...] Dalit women are victims of the caste system that they face both in relation to oppression and violence among their peers and in relation to the upper classes. Caste violence against the Dalit woman is primarily sexual in nature. She is the victim of a caste patriarchy that makes her subservient to men of higher caste, which leads to her sexual exploitation at the hands of these men. Dalit women also experience patriarchal control over their sexuality and work within their families. (Tamalapakula, 2014, p. 06)

It can be inferred, in this way, that the great shock and spread of the student's rape case occurred not only because of the cruelty of the act, but also because of the invisibility of women of even lower castes in the Indian hierarchy, as is the case. case of Dalit women. Although sexual violence towards these women is even more violent or commonplace than violence towards women of the highest caste, the student's position in the hierarchical substrate of the caste system worked in her favor for the international dissemination of the fact. The claims of Dalit Feminism run through these problematizations and are also concerned with the construction of the Dalit woman as a subject of Indian Feminism (Tamalapakula, 2014).

The lens used by post-colonial feminists, in this sense, values an understanding that there are peculiarities in the forms of affirmation of the female subject of colonized societies. The Indian woman, in the face of all her peculiarities, does not share, then, Western Feminism's understanding of anti-nationalism. The anti-nationalist struggle, embraced by the classic strands of authors such as Virginia Woolf (1992) or Simone de Beauvoir (1949), therefore, does not match the experience of the colonized woman, considering that for her it is through the reaffirmation of her peculiarities –As is the case with castes¹⁷, which their instincts operate. As is the case with the feminist surveys of Chandra Mohanty (1984), Depika Bahri (2006), and / or the Feminism Dalit of Sowjanya Tamalapakula (2014).

The Postcolonial Feminism of these authors, therefore, observes the construction of the image of women like Jyoti Singh, and everything that her case fostered, through lenses that exalt the need to enhance her culture, and of women as a national being, from a country that was constantly described as inferior by Western speeches. All the repercussions of the case of Jyoti Singh, therefore, need not deny the Indian traditions or the teachings of the original populations when looking for an improvement in the situation of women. Not denying her nationality is one of these.

Western feminism, too, when talking about women's understandings in colonized societies, builds female identity as a victim that ends up strengthening gender hierarchies, and these are felt in a broader way in Indian society. The image of women as victims, and never as protagonists of their actions, had already been criticized by feminists, post-structuralists, concerned with the way that dichotomies, especially linguistic ones (strong / weak, rational / irrational), serve to enhance the male at the expense of female. Following their reasoning, the continuous construction of an image of the woman as a victim does not operate satisfactorily when this woman needs to reaffirm her role as a solver of her own problems.

In modern India, the construction of the female image of victim, linked to the conception of the inherent feminine fragility and in the face of the oppressions that the female being desires during her life, works against the female population. India currently has 35.25 million fewer women than men, according to the 2011 Census. In the previous census, in comparative quantities, India was second only to China, with 40.61 billion women missing, in the ranking of the so-called Asian gender gap. The number of so-called 'missing women' in Asia shown in the table below points to the discrepancy between the number of women and men in several Asian countries such as China, Afghanistan, North Korea and Pakistan, where India ranks second in the ranking with 39.28 million missing women. According to Hundal (2013), only with the birth of 60 to 70 million girls the number of women would equal men.

Valerie M. Hudson et al (2005) defend the thesis that, in line with other actors, the gap between the Asian genders is the result of a preference for the male child and a profound devaluation of female life. The authors believe that cultural aspects of India are largely responsible for this

situation. Practices such as the payment of dowry, the exclusion of divorced women, inheritances that cannot be given to women, abortion of girls, among others, are primarily responsible.

Some authors, such as Vibhuti Patel (2011) demonstrate that the gap between the Indian genders, in particular, was widened with the advent of new technologies in the Asian country. Ultrasound technology for sex identification, along with legalization of abortion, has increased rates of termination of pregnancies for female fetuses in India. This fact, according to the author, aggravated the discrepancy between men and women in the country. It was through research by the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), which aimed to test with a group of pregnant women the effectiveness of some technologies to detect genetic conditions and fetal malformations, that the Indian researchers realized that the greatest interest of the volunteers was to know the sex of the fetus. Once they discovered that the fetus was female, they demanded an abortion. This research drew the attention of the Center for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), which pressured the Indian Minister of Health to ban the use of ultrasound tests in the country (Patel, 2011). Even with the ban, the preference for boys still feels like Indian families,

Although 'prenatal discrimination' was banned in 1996, the law is not applicable and is not yet familiar to all Indian families. Thus, the preference for the male baby persists, often out of mere practical, financial interests, because the parents may not be able to pay the dowry to (another) daughter. (Saarthak, 2016)

It was not only the abortions of female fetuses that aggravated the Indian problem, the murder of girls at birth and the neglect of their daughters' health and education can also be cited as a major aggravator of the female situation in the country (Patel, 2005). The preference for boys can also be evidenced by the gap between the genders of illiteracy, as shown by V.S. Madana (2014): "[...] the 2011 census shows that 82% of boys and only 65% of girls are literate. The difference of 17% indicates that many Indians still believe that the education of children is preference over that of daughters." (Madana, 2014, p.01)

Also, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, another resistance group had been formed mostly by women. Known for the colors of their saris, typical Indian dress, which are all pink, the women who make up the Gulabi Gang have the mission to protect the weakest from abuse, fight corruption and discourage traditions such as the wedding of girls (Gang, 2016). Currently with more than 100 members spread across state districts, according to the official website, the group has become known for its action in favor of women raped by their husbands.

The movements, therefore, illustrate the need and the possibility of a transformation outside the rules predetermined by the colonizing discourses and universalist Western Feminisms. The image of Indian women as an agent of conflict resolution breaks the idea of victim women extolled by European discourses of Western women (Mohanty, 1984) of a Western society relegated to savagery (Said, 2007). Furthermore, the praise of these female groups facilitates a more detailed study of the group's actions and political organization, which permeate the contacts considered as aggressive. These characteristics of the Gulabi Gang can be observed by Bollywood film productions based on the group in question, such as the film 'Gulabi Gang' (2016).

The murder of girls and the abortion of female fetuses can be justified with, in addition to violent cultural aspects, the strengthening of the victim's speech. Although the female situation in India remains inhospitable, the idea that suffering is inherent in the female condition can be

partly justified as a motivator for the strengthening of the gender gap and for situations that have been aggravated because of this. The homogenization of female oppression, therefore, once again, is not shared by Indian women (Mohanty, 1984).

4.0 Conclusions

It is inferred, therefore, that the claim to the solution of the problems that afflict genders in India must pay attention not to be Universalist, ethnocentric and colonizing as Classical Feminism. The case of rape by Jyoti Singh reiterates the need for the voices of these women to be heard and their experiences to be praised in a way that does not create new absolute truths, but that it creates possibilities for healthy dialogue between the diverse feminist experiences, both Western and eastern.

Research concerned with a non-universalist and non-colonizing solution, in particular to the increasingly recurrent cases of collective rape, must be attentive to a rescue of the ancestry or premises of pre-colonial societies - proposed by post-colonial approaches - in a way critical. It must be understood that the problems related to gender were also a reality in these ancestral societies, and that they were aggravated by the colonization processes. This ancestral rescue, however, must be aware of the impossibility of erasing the oppressive past and the importance of the permanence of cyclical criticisms.

The history of Jyoti Singh demonstrates, therefore, that Indian problems do not necessarily need to be solved through the extinction of values and systems such as caste or even the imposition of predetermined methods for female emancipation. A caste system disconnected from the colonizing ideology that classifies it as naturally hierarchical, for example, can be replaced by a non-hierarchical caste system, concerned with the problems that imported characterization can bring. Likewise, understanding that discourses and empowerment actions of Western Feminism do not fit the Indian problems because they do not consider the peculiarities of this country is a fundamental part of understanding the importance that cultural rescue should be concerned with female emancipation, the case of the Gandhian anti-colonial struggle.

Therefore, an anti-colonial struggle along the lines of Gandhi, now waged in the fields of academic production, can serve India and its search for a post-colonial society. With the necessary adaptations, a decolonization of thought would occur, therefore, through a rescue of the Indian colonial struggle. This process, however, must be concerned with the problematization of the Gandhian image itself, in order to formulate more suitable solutions to modern India. A work by the Indians, by the Indians.

References

- Bahri, D. (2013). Feminism and / in Postcolonialism. *Feminist Studies, Florianópolis*, p. 659-868.
- Beauvoir, S. (1970). *The Second Sex - Facts and Myths*. European Book Diffusion. Sérgio Milliet. (Trans). Ed. 4. São Paulo.
- Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural Violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 27(3):291-305.
- Gang, G. (2016). What we do. Official website Gulabi Gang, Uttar Pradesh. Retrieved from: www.gulabigangofficial.in/what-we-do/ on May 10, 2018.
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Delhi_gang_rape_and_murder#:~:text=12.2%20Rape%20crimes-,Incident,Pi%20in%20Saket%2C%20South%20Delhi.

- Hudson, V. M. Boer, A. M. (2005). Missing Women and Bare Branches: Gender Balance and Conflict. *ECSP Report*, 11: 20-24.
- Madana, V.S. (2014). Violence against women in India: Some issues. *International Journal of Scientific Research*. 3(9):505-506.
- Mohanty, Ch. T. (1991). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. Mohanty, Chandra T.; Russo, Ann; Torres, Lourdes (Ed.). *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 333-338.
- Monte, I X. (2013). The Debate and Debates: Feminist Approaches to International Relations. *Feminist Studies, Florianópolis*, 21(1): 59-80.
- Patel, V. (2011). A long Battle for the Girl Child. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol 46 n. 21, Mumbai.
- Pokharel, K. & Beckett, P. (2013). Crimes Against women: Three tragedies and the call for reform in India. *The Wall Street Journal*. 1st Ed. E-book Kindle.
- Saarthak, Initiatives of Relevance. Women's situation in India. (2016). Retrieved from: www.sarthakindia.org/womens_situation_India.html on May 13, 2017.
- Said, E. (2007). *Orientalism - the East as an invention of the West*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- Spivak, G. Cha. (1999). *A critique of postcolonial reason: toward a history of the vanishing present*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Spivak, G. Cha. (2014). Encyclopædia Britannica. *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica.
- Tamalapakula S. (2014). *Understanding Dalit Feminism*. Andhra Pradesh. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/10225419/Understanding_Dalit_Feminism.
- Ticker, J. A. & Sjoberg, L. (2013). Feminism. Baylis, John; Smith, Steve; Owens, Patricia. *The globalization of world politics: An introduction to international relations*. Oxford University Press, 195-210.