

Feminist epistemic injustice in neo-vedantic modern Indian philosophy: The androcentric agent and agency in decolonial theory

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Abstract

This paper examines the sociological dimensions of Neo-Vedantic nationalist philosophy through a feminist epistemological lens, addressing a critical gap in scholarship concerning epistemic injustice embedded in canonical philosophical traditions. While Neo Vedanta positions itself as a metaphysical framework that asserts parity with dominant philosophical systems, insufficient attention has been given to its androcentric assumptions and exclusionary knowledge practices. The objective of this study is to interrogate how feminist epistemic injustice is reproduced through philosophical abstraction and spiritual universalism. Employing a feminist critical hermeneutic and decolonial philosophical methodology, the study undertakes interpretive textual analysis informed by standpoint epistemology. The analysis reveals that the philosopher under study occupies a privileged epistemic position that limits engagement with marginalized perspectives, particularly those shaped by embodied and gendered experiences. The emphasis on inner consciousness and metaphysical liberation marginalizes lived realities, thereby devaluing experiential knowledge and silencing feminist concerns. The study highlights how spiritualized knowledge production undermines democratic epistemic participation. The findings underscore the need for feminist interventions in decolonial philosophy to challenge patriarchal structures embedded within metaphysical traditions.

Keywords: Decolonial philosophy; epistemic injustice; feminist epistemology; knowledge production; Neo Vedanta.

1. Introduction

On August 14, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru welcomed political independence to India, saying, At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. History, there, took a turn. Yet, the country's intellectual history is still at the gates, negotiating independence from the colonizer. As Nigam (2020) points out, it's time for Indian academia to reconceptualize decolonial theory with autochthonous ideologies focusing on the future rather than the past.

During the ongoing rigorous colonial conversation between the colonizer and the Elite class colonized, what is ignored and historically lost are the voices and agency of the marginalized, especially women, continuing a feminist epistemic injustice in Indian Philosophy. To instantiate this argument, I focus on Prof. Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya's Neo-Vedantic philosophy, acclaimed as distinctively Indian, as a representative thinker of Modern Indian Philosophy.

1.1. Purpose of study

The objective of this study is to critically examine how feminist epistemic injustice is perpetuated within dominant philosophical and spiritual frameworks. Specifically, it explores how philosophical abstraction by privileging detached, supposedly universal reasoning, and spiritual universalism, by imposing overarching moral or spiritual claims, can systematically marginalize women's ways of knowing, experiences, and knowledge practices. By interrogating these processes, the study aims to uncover the subtle mechanisms through which women's epistemic contributions are devalued or rendered invisible, highlighting the need for more inclusive and situated approaches to knowledge production that recognize diverse perspectives and lived realities.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study employs a qualitative, non-empirical philosophical methodology grounded in feminist epistemology, standpoint theory, and decolonial critique. The primary method is critical hermeneutic textual analysis, through which Neo-Vedantic nationalist philosophy is examined as a socio-epistemic project. The analysis focuses on the writings and speeches of Prof. Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya, particularly his articulation of *Svaraj* and Advaitic freedom, and interprets these texts within their historical context of colonial modernity and nationalist knowledge production. Bhattacharyya is approached as a socio-epistemic agent whose social positioning shapes both the possibilities and limits of knowledge production.

The research materials consist of primary philosophical texts by Bhattacharyya and secondary scholarly literature in feminist epistemology, decolonial theory, and social philosophy, including works by Fricker, Lugones, Harding, Haraway, Collins, Byskov, and related scholars. These materials are systematically reviewed and conceptually synthesized to identify forms of testimonial, hermeneutical, and structural epistemic injustice, with particular attention to gendered embodiment and the exclusion of marginalized knowers. A normative feminist standpoint perspective is applied to evaluate the democratic claims of Neo-Vedantic decoloniality and to expose the androcentric assumptions embedded in transcendental accounts of freedom. Through this method, the study critically assesses how decolonial philosophy can reproduce internal hierarchies of power and epistemic exclusion, especially in relation to women's lived experiences.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Epistemology of the colonized

At the colonial-nationalist intersection is the formulation of Modern Indian philosophy, giving it an anti-colonial color. A notable historical event during coloniality that occurred from both ends of the world is the spiritualization of the East and the materialization of the West, which shaped many of the anticolonial epistemological responses. Among many who believed in India as a spiritual granary for the world was Prof. Bhattacharya. Scholars like Raveh (2023) and Nigam (2020) proffer the pioneership of Indian decoloniality in knowledge production to Prof. Krishnachandra Bhattacharya. He successfully put together Neo-Vedanta as a

prominent attribute of Modern Indian philosophy, where the classical metaphysical elements of Vedantic philosophy are reinterpreted in a modern framework to offer a majorly spiritual solution to contemporary problems. Prof. Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya (henceforth KCB) (1875 - 1949) was a professor of philosophy who polished the classical past for the present and reflected some light into the intellectual future of the country in post-coloniality. Like the other canonical Modern Indian philosophers, he was also an anglophone thinker who had his infelicitous situatedness in coloniality.

Among KCB's vast compilation of works, a glaring ideology of historical interest is 'Svaraj.' Svaraj, in its Sanskrit definition, means 'sva' (self) and 'raj' (rule). M K Gandhi supposedly used the term in his work 'Hind Swaraj' first, and then it was adopted by many, including KCB (Rathore 2017; Raghuramaraju 2018). Svaraj, in a more magnified sense, means freedom. KCB stretches his idea of svaraj/freedom from secular to spiritual with different meanings and functions, but with a similar intent of freedom from slavery. KCB lays bare the difference in philosophical content and sociological experience by differentiating secular and spiritual freedom as separate categories. Both categories are tightly compartmentalized, with little epistemic access to feminist interventions.

The secular freedom, KCB structures to free the self from socio-political external coloniality, and the spiritual freedom looks to liberate the self from internal bondages. Secular freedom addresses India's cultural and epistemological colonization, advocating for assimilation and critical thinking. Spiritual freedom involves preserving Indian authenticity without cultural superimposition. 'Svaraj' for KCB is not a plea or demand but an exposition of the realizable. KCB's decolonial approach emphasizes the potential for freedom for the colonized rather than focusing on the colonial experience of slavery. His passionate advocacy for decoloniality, especially the decoloniality of knowledge, is captured in his 1928 speech "Svaraj in Ideas" to his students at Hoogly College. In the speech, KCB (1) outlines the nature of colonial slavery and Freedom, and (2) discusses the impact of coloniality on Indian academia. He also (3) lays the groundwork for his decolonial strategy and (4) explains the anticipated decolonial process. KCB understands the coloniality of knowledge and culture as "all the more serious in consequence" (Bhattacharyya, 2011) when it subtly dominates one culture's ideas over another. His primary concern is the coloniality of knowledge, which he believes leads to the "slavery of spirit" (Bhattacharyya, 2011), a complex phenomenon imposed on willing minds. To KCB, assimilation is the secular act of freedom. KCB also notes that no assimilation must happen in the spiritual quest for freedom, which must be essentially an Indigenous individual endeavor. He writes, "In spiritual life, however, there is no demand for compromising our ideals to have a smooth sailing with the times. If possible and so far as lies in our power, the times have to be adapted to our life and not our life to the times" (Bhattacharyya 2011). Bhattacharyya (1930) delves into attaining absolute freedom through subjectivity, focusing on the 'sva' in svaraj. KCB's approach to freedom is not only social or ethical but also ontological and epistemological, exploring our relationship with the world, psychological context, and spiritual subject. He describes the subject as an entity known through the personal pronoun "I." This subjectivity transitions through bodily, psychological, and spiritual stages of subjectivity.

3.2. Contemporary decolonial light on neo-vedanta

Understanding is a multi-dimensional journey. Understanding of self, other, cultures, and the world is influenced, to some extent, by the cultures where we are born and live (Giri, 2021). In a contemporary decolonial light, KCB is appreciated from multiple angles. Odyneic (2018) describes K. C. Bhattacharyya's engagement with classical Indian Advaita as a remarkable act of intellectual decolonization, achieved through an interpretative, imaginative, and empathetic confrontative philosophy. Bhattacharyya's philosophy was cross-culturally reactive and professed a unique theory and method toward the classical Indian past, making it confrontative and forward-looking. He redefined the liberating knowledge of Advaita from a colonized perspective facing Euro-modernity. Ganeri (2014) views KCB's philosophy as discovering Indian classicism as a method of intellectual decolonization. KCB transcended his colonial context to become a cosmopolitan thinker by adapting, translating, and defending Advaita's liberatory knowledge within a modern framework acceptable to the West. Mehta (1974) contrasts Indian and Western philosophical approaches, noting that Indian thinkers like Bhattacharyya did not aim to build comprehensive systems. Instead, Bhattacharyya sought meaning within

the Indian tradition while acknowledging Western influence. Raghuramaraju (2007) believes colonialism significantly altered the practice of philosophy in India by disrupting its relational network. KCB's finest decolonial action was initiating a dialogue with the West, which is inherently decolonial because colonization lacks dialogue. Odyneic (2018) describes KCB's philosophy as a confrontative dialogue, emphasizing that epistemological colonization reduces the intellectual participation of the colonized, promoting a monopolized monologue. KCB's dialogue differentiates between understanding the West as the Other and balancing with the Other, empowering the colonial Subject with agency and voice. Bagchi (1981) writes about KCB's ability to assimilate Western and Indian thought, highlighting his method of initially using Western terms to express Indian concepts before revealing their unique logic. Mehta (1987) points out that modern Indian thinkers like Bhattacharyya reinterpreted ancient texts in contemporary language, ensuring eternal truths adapted to current needs. KCB's balanced dialogue respectfully engages the West, promoting a nuanced decolonial interaction.

Ganeri (2014) notes that KCB's philosophy counters the colonial denial of respect for the colonized's epistemology. Bhagchi (1992) discusses how KCB's understanding of Advaita Vedanta can interact with Western phenomenology (Husserl), contributing to philosophical thought through personal commitment and reflection. This method of "self-engagement" aligns Bhattacharyya with phenomenological traditions. Ganeri (2014) also highlights KCB's sympathetic interpretation of Indian classics as an exercise in aesthetic appreciation. Ghosh (2001) emphasizes the importance of inwardness and experiential engagement in understanding one's tradition, allowing for creative interpretation. KCB remains significant in contemporary decolonial efforts because he identified the subtle sense of unfreedom in cultural colonization and courageously recognized that the actual subject of freedom is the self/'I.' He took responsibility for freedom upon himself, asserting that willful submission and learning must be undone through a deliberate understanding of the consequences. Freedom is a right as well as an obligation.

The contemporary decolonial light does not expose the perpetuating androcentric and colonial elements within the decolonial attempts. When looked through a feminist-tinted window, a recurring epistemic injustice is visible. Feminist epistemology in Indian academia, unfortunately, always has to stand aside or be behind mainstream philosophical interests. Though there have been standardizing works on reviving historical female voices and feminine agencies, the androcentric elements in mainstream philosophy and its continuity into futuristic theories have not been exposed significantly. Epistemic injustice is an inveterate approach to the debates on the coloniality of knowledge and decolonizing knowledge. Fricker (2007) defines epistemic injustice as a distributive unfairness in epistemic materials like information and access to education. Decolonial feminists ushered feminist epistemic injustice into decolonial turns to verify and rectify, in the words of Maria Lugones, indifference by the native men toward the persistent patriarchal institutions of coloniality. Decolonial Feminists interfere in decolonial theory to point out that there is a gender dispute within decolonization, which the decolonial theorists are indifferent towards (Lugones, 2007, 2010, 2014, 2016, 2020).

KCB, diligently placed in decolonial theory by contemporary scholars as an Indian reaction to epistemic coloniality, also carries an array of epistemic injustices. It is still an anticolonial reaction to appraise India as a spiritual equivalent of the West. However, in the strenuous conversation with the West, the true liberatory goal of the decolonial "epistemic turn" runs short. A decolonial feminist interest in KCB is evoked to develop a gendered understanding of how the Secular-Spiritual Svaraj is laid open as a decolonial idea. The politics of Freedom within the decolonial theory talks of a democratic serving of epistemology, which it must do so. An understanding of a feminist indifference in KCB as an agent and his agency will highlight how KCB plays a role both as a knower and a sub-knower in decoloniality and will point out the feminist epistemic injustices within the obstinate spiritual arguments in Modern Indian Philosophy.

3.3. KCB as a socio-epistemic agent

KCB is a historical agent who owns a social positioning that places him on a dais from which he can profess Freedom, sensible to some and unacceptable to others. 'Positioning' is a social process that situates humans in a particular totality (Bacevic, 2023). For Searle (2010), it is a significant fundamental process of human reality. In the social world, there are no subjects/objects that are not positioned. Social positioning mostly

leads to epistemic positioning, which positions particular groups of people on a merit scale and others on a non-receiving end. Byskov (2021) notes that social inequalities and epistemic positioning are intertwined in two ways. First, the pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities strengthen epistemic inequalities, and epistemic injustices further deepen and magnify existing socioeconomic inequalities (Kidd et al., 2017). Therefore, "epistemic (dis)advantage and socioeconomic (in)equalities are inextricably linked to each other, and it, therefore, becomes necessary to consider what role this relationship plays in creating epistemic injustices" (Byskov, 2021).

KCB is situated at a juncture of two epistemic contracts: horizontal and vertical. At the horizontal, KCB is a sub-knower pushed to the global south by the north as a colonized subject. His success as a decolonial agent comes from the fact that he rose to the colonial occasion as an epistemic agent, voicing his Indian perspective while simultaneously abstracting the agency of his oppressor. KCB's epistemological project of 'Svaraj in Ideas' becomes a political struggle of the colonized at this scene of conflict. His speech and his trailing philosophical works that adhered to the speech's policies ascertain the colonizer's right to decide the credibility, validity, and process of his knowledge and produce knowledge from the thinking axis of the colonized. His act inverts the colonial dichotomy between the knower and the sub-knower, which is an epistemological revolt. He seeks epistemic justice for the marginalized 'Indian' perspective in knowledge production, and his decolonial success is the assimilative quality of his work.

However, at the vertical intersection of epistemic injustice, where the epistemic hierarchy within India is highlighted, KCB is a subject engaging in a similar pre-colonial dominant system of epistemology. The politico-epistemic debate happens horizontally between KCB as an epistemic agent of the global south and the Western scholars of the global north. A similar communication does not take place vertically down between KCB and the marginalized population of India, who are also sub-knowners under coloniality but doubly subordinated under external and internal coloniality. This forms a breach in the order of justice and creates a wound in the 'epistemic trust' between KCB and 'othered' knowers. Such a vertical break in Indian epistemology has been externally motivated by epistemic structures and agents to perpetuate a domestic class of knowers and sub-knowners. Byskov writes, "whether someone is in an already advantaged or disadvantaged position, socioeconomically and epistemically speaking, determines the extent to which someone can be said to suffer from an epistemic injustice: those who as a consequence of structural inequalities already are likely to be granted excess credibility have a weaker claim to epistemic injustice than those who are less epistemically privileged" (Byskov, 2021).

From a specific elite epistemic (high caste, male) positioning, KCB's testimony of 'Svaraj' talks of specific Freedom and 'unfreedom'/'slavery.' Raghuramaraju (2017) points out: "Bhattacharyya does not offer any philosophical explanation when dealing with the relation between these two (freedom and slavery) incompatible concepts. Raghuramaraju (2017) discusses the relationship between Freedom and slavery as "Freedom, then slavery and then overcoming slavery to reach svaraj; and (2) Slavery, and then Svaraj. A, not A, and then A; and not A and then A". I concur with Raghuramaraju (2017) that KCB's socio-epistemic position on Freedom is closer to the former than the latter. He had a certain freedom by right of his birth, class, and gender within a situation of unfreedom, which places him in an advantaged position as an epistemic subject, and his epistemic project of freeing the 'Indian' Self uses 'Indian' as a generic epistemic object. This 'epistemic object' is a multitude of communities that face different degrees of oppression. Bhambra (2014) and Lugones and Spelman (2018) wrote about similarly positioning marginalized communities as epistemic objects, especially women. From a hierarchical positioning, KCB's idea of Svaraj mainly concerns the country's cultural and epistemological colonization. He laments the loss of "Indian contribution" to knowledge and the growth of a "new caste" (Bhattacharyya, 2011) of anglophone scholars in India who only retain their authentic knowledge to satisfy their "curiosity." In extension, KCB uses an Advaitic notion of Freedom to project a decolonial proposition of Freedom. KCB's Freedom is a 'freedom from' the Self and, to supplement, from external coloniality. The nature of the Advaitic transcendental Freedom nullifies the occurrence of a colonial invasion of the body by entirely dissociating from the body and the Self by locating the Self away from imagination and

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thought. KCB communicates this transcendental notion of Freedom horizontally to the colonizer and vertically to the educated class of India, who occupy the highest levels of the perpendicular.

Although his positioning gives KCB epistemic credibility, it also binds him from another perspective on Svaraj. He remains largely ignorant of the degree of 'unfreedom' of other marginalized subjects located under his positionality experiences. For instance, KCB does not address women in his speech as a separate category, and he vaguely mentions caste at the end. He uses the term 'Indian' homogenously and does not acknowledge the colonial problems of social stratification. Likewise, his philosophical discourse of Advaitic Freedom does not appeal to the "subalterns" like women who cannot easily dissociate themselves from their bodies and experience multifold oppression, predominantly because their Self is contained in a specifically gendered body (Simon & Hasan, 2025). The Indian *pramana* of *Sabda* defines testimony as a valid source of knowledge. According to *Sabda*, there can be *Vaidika* (uttered by God) and *Laukika* (secular) *aptavakya*. *Aptavakya* is a word that a trustworthy person utters. KCB is a *Laukika* uttering the *Vaidika*.

As a consequence of KCB's one-dimensional interpretation of Svaraj, it perpetuates a feminist epistemic injustice. The complexity of KCB's position as an epistemic agent is revealed when Miranda Fricker's theory of epistemic injustice is considered. According to Fricker (2007), epistemic injustice happens when it is difficult for particular knowers to know what interests them. KCB is mainly silent on the social gender issues in his speech, Svaraj in ideas, and ignorant of the gender trouble the Advaita notion of transcendental Freedom produces in decoloniality. KCB commits a transactional testimonial injustice by his social positioning by birth and profession. As an epistemic agent, he is a knower as much as a sub-knower. Thus, in KCB, as an epistemic agent, the subaltern does not speak. As long as marginalized voices are unheard, the more considerable demands of decoloniality for equality, authenticity, and plurality are unmet. Wanderer notes that Testimonial betrayal emerges when one focuses on the thick trust relations between acquaintances within the practice. The injustice here includes the experience of humiliating rejection felt as part of the sting of betrayal (Wanderer 2017). It is probably the fracture in an epistemic trust that is pointed out. Jal (2023) writes about Chattopadhyaya's (2023) interpretation of KCB and asks, "How can freedom be possible when slavery not merely rules the roost, but is the precondition of Indian society" (Jal 2023). What KCB lacks in his theorizing of Svaraj, according to standpoint epistemology (Haraway, 2013; Harding, 2016; Hartsock, 2019) and intersectionality (Collins, 2015), is the very particular insight into mechanisms of power and oppression accessible to the 'epistemically minority' and not usually accessible to those whose epistemic position aligns with the 'majority, dominant group' (Bacevic 2023). As Fricker (2007), Bohman (2012), and Coady (2017) argue, epistemic injustice cannot be separated from larger structures of socioeconomic distribution, domination, inequality, and justice. Indeed, the social justice condition holds that what makes epistemic injustice an injustice is primarily connected to larger structural injustices, including racism, poverty, marginalization, and ostracization, because such socioeconomic factors are determinants in establishing epistemic (dis)advantage (Byskov 2021).

Another aspect of KCB's epistemic positioning is the audience of his 'Svaraj.' Although it was spoken out in 1928 to a gathering of college students in Hoogly College, its primary recipients have been academic circles. Odyneic (2018) points out, "Simply put, the recipient of Krishnachandra's comparative philosophy was an epistemologically empowered modern Indian subject thinking and acting for intellectual decolonization". Fraser (2014) analyses feminist "subaltern counterpublics" in an androcentric public sphere. The "public sphere" is a space of social life in which public opinion can be produced, and all private people are allowed to contribute to its construction, hence shaping the discursive nature of politics (Habermas 1991). Fraser (2014) criticizes Habermas' (1991) public sphere theory, stating that subordinated groups expressing counter discourses are "subaltern counter publics." Fraser (2014) pointed out that counter-publics aim to transform the public sphere "where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser 2014). Fraser's (2014) argument is crucial, considering the significance of hierarchical power dynamics that generate disadvantages for groups of people whose members lack epistemic knowledge to challenge dominant discourses and shape public opinion. This prevents oppressed people from representing themselves in the public domain (Murray &

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Durham, 2019). Fraser's (2014) Subaltern Counterpublic is absent from KCB's audience. Without the subaltern in his audience, KCB's act of epistemic confrontation and establishing an epistemic dialogue across time, space, and races becomes what Raghuramaraju (2007) and Odyneic (2018) call a "one-sided confronting attitude towards modern Western philosophy (particularly Kantian transcendental philosophy)".

3.4. Advaita as a political-epistemic agency

KCB's transcendental swaraj uses Advaita as a liberatory epistemology to formulate a decolonial concept of Freedom. Though highly acclaimed for his ingenuity in repurposing Advaita from the past to the future through the present modern framework, Advaita philosophy inherently carries some hermeneutical epistemic injustices, especially in feminist lenses. Fricker (2007) explains that hermeneutical injustice "occurs at a prior stage when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences". Advaita places women at a disadvantage, and when a notion of Freedom is extracted from Advaita and projected as a probable futuristic theory, it distresses women to make sense of their social experiences and degree of Freedom. One lacuna within Advaita's philosophy of Freedom that adversely affects women as knowers that KCB promotes is its treatment of the idea of embodiment. The philosophy of embodiment acknowledges and recognizes that the 'self' is not merely contained in a body. However, the Self has a body with which it lives as a social, political, and ethical being. Perhaps the best sense of embodiment is understood when Choraqui (2021) writes in his introduction to *The Body and Embodiment: A Philosophical Guide*, "Our body is the great assumption of our lives: the fact that I'm in a body, or that I have a body which is mine, is implied in everything I do, everything I expect and plan to do, and in everything I see and understand.

Our body is so obvious that everything we appeal to understand it would be less obvious, less certain than this: I have a body, I am a body. The body explains rather than is explained. The fact that I have a body is primary" (Choraqui 2021). The field of philosophy, both East and West, has always treated embodiment/the body as an 'other.' When philosophers like Plato argue that the mind should have control over our bodies and desires, two things could be implied: one, that to realize one's higher goals, which is the world of ideas and knowledge, the distinctive world meant for human beings, one should discount the body and try to have mental control over it, which also shows that (1) the body has been taken as an obstacle in the construction and attainment of knowledge, and (2), that whatever significance a body could have in the construction of knowledge, has been denied. Father of Modern European Philosophy, Descartes also assumes a similar distinction between the body and the mind, which Gilbert Ryle critiqued as a "ghost in a machine." The dissociation of the body from epistemology and considering knowledge as produced only within the mental realm is not an explicit phenomenon in Western philosophy alone. A similar treatment of the body is visible in the Advaitic notion of Freedom, which demands a dissociation from the body to attain the knowledge of the Self, which will offer the ultimate freedom /*moksha*. This patriarchal notion of knowledge production is evident in Indian philosophy, too, a classic example of which is KCB's philosophy of transcendental Svaraj. Svaraj here is attained through the sequential dissociation from the objective. The body is understood as the subjective, but only the initial stage of the subjective, which must soon be overcome to attain proper knowledge, aka freedom/ the 'sva' of Svaraj. The immediate criteria of Freedom is to take mental command over the body and identify the 'self' as dislocated from the body. Vedantins consider the body the *bhokta* (enjoyer) in the empirical world, and the Self is a *sakshi* (witness) to it. Chattopadhyaya writes, "The role of the body in the context of knowledge in general is considered ambivalent. On the one hand, it helps us know life in nature, and, on the other, it hinders our thought for the beyond" (Chattopadhyaya, 2023). The body is considered as an appearance (*vivarta*) of Brahman, and when the Self, which is Self-evident and self-evidencing, finally distinguishes the body (as an object) from 'I,' the sense of the body (together with the sense of a lived body and bodily experiences) gets dissolved.

Thus, the body is considered a hindrance to attaining spiritual knowledge, and knowledge production is entirely attributed to the intellect, which is theoretically situated within and without the body. Alcoff (2020) defines the "belief that thought can be separated from its specific, embodied, and geo-historical source" as a

transcendental delusion. The pressing issue in Advaitic decoloniality is the trans temporality of the same transcendental delusion. The participation and contribution of the body in the production of knowledge, which in the case of KCB's transcendental Svaraj, is estimated to be nothing, which in turn recalls Marzban Jal's branding of KCB's Svaraj as a phantasmagoria (Jal, 2023). It results in the deprivation of marginalized categories, who are defined by the bodies their 'Sva's are contained in, like women, to attain Freedom and participate in the production of knowledge about Freedom.

KCB regenerates an Advaitic transcendental delusion in his transcendental Svaraj by dissociating the importance of the body in the realization of Freedom and solely burdening the knowledge to go beyond the mental realm. Thapan (1985; 1997) discusses the embodiment of women and the resulting separation they face from theory. Grosz (2013) has also attempted to highlight that knowledge has been sexualized, which follows from the sexualization of bodies, when she writes, "If the body is an unacknowledged or an inadequately acknowledged condition of knowledge and if, as I will argue, the body is always sexually specific, concretely sexed, this implies that the hegemony over the knowledge that masculinity has thus far accomplished can be subverted, upset, or transformed through women's assertion of a right to know, independent of and autonomous from the methods and presumptions regulating the prevailing (patriarchal) forms of knowledge" (Grosz, 2013).

The body's role in the politics of oppression, resistance, and Freedom, especially a female body, is a significant aspect of decolonial studies. A woman's body is a historic site. Many wars have been waged on them, and many wars waged worked through them, including coloniality and the resulting backlash of decoloniality. She is made of her body, and her body makes her, in turn. Women's identities emanate from and are deeply rooted in their bodies, without which their value appears to be reduced. The idea of the lived body recognizes that a person's subjectivity is conditioned by sociocultural facts and the behavior and expectations of others in ways she has not chosen. The lived body helps one understand one's physical experiences and identify the boundaries set by the androcentric framework of society. Through one's lived body, one can recognize the limitations put on oneself by the various social inscriptions. Through her lived body, a woman understands that the roles she is expected to play are not what she desires. A continually conditioned body binds a woman to play within the social gender rules and also molds her 'self' accordingly (Kausar et al., 2024). The body becomes a medium of learning and, for women, a means through which they are subjugated. The lived body makes her realize that the social inscriptions restrict her from participating in knowledge production without baggage like men. She learns only what is prescribed for her to know by the patriarchal standards set by society through her bodily inscriptions, and the lived body helps her question those etchings. Meenakshi Tapan writes, "Our embodiment is experienced in our everyday lives as lived and communicative bodies. To the extent we can articulate our embodied experience through language, emotions, memory, and speech, we use our bodily senses to perceive and give voice to our experience" (Thapan, 2009). The embodiment of the female Self is a cause of the atrocities she has to face, and her lived experiences are calibrated with the same situatedness.

Moitra (2002) writes, "When women's lived experience does not converge with the theories relating to the human condition, then such experiences are relegated to the non-human domain of animality or nature. Another way of addressing such divergence is to see women's lived experiences from a transformed or transcendent perspective. In this way, gender can be avoided by neutering a woman's lived experience. Women are thus seen as the problem" (Moitra, 2002). The body, thereby being a sexed entity, holds the category of gender. When masculinity is by default considered objective and neutral (Haraway, 2013; Harding & Hintikka, 2003; Pateman & Grosz, 2013), women are epistemically constrained or bounded by their social position, experience, and identity (Bacevic, 2023). The othering of the body deems women insignificant in constructing knowledge, as they are seen as mere bodies. This ascribes the quality and criteria of knowledge production to men, which results in a sexualized, androcentric, male-gazed knowledge.

Consequently, when a woman is immersed in androcentric philosophies that consider being emotional as feminine, she is equated to "a form of non-and/or irrationality" (Agra 2020). Agra (2020) writes, "A possible outcome of such immersion in such philosophies is for the woman to deny herself of her emotions and start

acting or thinking 'like a man.' Another possible outcome is that because she now thinks that she is 'essentially or naturally emotional,' she will begin to regard herself and her kind as inferior to men, may think that she will never be able to match the philosophical abilities of men, and then stop philosophizing altogether" (Agra 2020). Thus, with her identity and merit proportional to her body functionality in society and limited and reduced to the body, the woman cannot bypass and transcend into the spiritual unchallengingly. A biased basis of knowledge production is established and maintained when the subject source of epistemology is considered. The produced knowledge is androcentric, and it disenfranchises women from exercising their right to voice and situationality. This leads to "epistemic paralysis, a loss of the ability to know or think in a certain way because of the disconnection between what is received as the 'correct' way of knowing or thinking and what one has organically practiced, developed, and/or experienced" (Agra 2020).

With her lived body and the lived experiences of herself disembodied from the knowledge production of Freedom, women have become insignificant objects in Svaraj's national project. This leads to the epistemic destruction of Vedanta's structural authority and testimonial credibility to KCB's Transcendental Svaraj. Disempowering structures of cognitive authority (Vedanta) make it difficult for disempowered groups (marginalized categories without access to Vedanta and Vedantic knowledge production) to place their trust wisely (Code 2018). When women are systematically taught to distrust their cognition and to defer to the epistemic authority of men, it can be challenging to develop appropriate self-trust and proper trust in others. Such institutions have historically failed to acknowledge and justify the mistrust particular populations have in them. The problem is not the withholding of trust or improper distrust but rather the breach of trust caused by the institutions, leading to the inability to trust. The violation of trust that leads to a population's failure to trust in communal epistemic institutions constitutes an epistemic trust injustice (Grasswick 2017).

4. CONCLUSION

Although KCB remains an Indian flag of decoloniality, it should be explained and expanded with the evolving definitions of decoloniality. Decolonization is not just about a critique of Eurocentrism but also about producing our own infrastructures of theory. With the lens now turned inward, it grows increasingly important to understand the line of continuing historical maneuver. With standpoint spectacles over every academic pair of eyes, it is challenging to ignore KCB's socio-epistemic agency and the related ostracization and hesitance that comes with it. As much as Advaita is laminated with a *pavitrata*, time exposes that KCB's reformation of Advaita as Neo-Vedanta in modernity cannot address specific, concrete problems of the world, and as long as it avoids empirical societal issues, it will remain a modern spiritual venture.

KCB's emphasis on freedom overlooks the varying degrees and intensities of slavery (in class, caste, and gender) within the Indian population. KCB and, in general, the Neo-Vedantic Modern Indian philosophy, are in a one-directional debate with the West, eager to equalize this colonized self with the colonizer and acquire a theoretical trophy for India. This diminishes the democratic nature of knowledge production. If the true soul of the nation has to find an utterance, contemporary scholarship must acknowledge the marginalized voices, including women, and make a new theoretical tryst with destiny.

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