Being in Grief: A Teacher's Autobiographical Exploration of Pedagogy in Postcolonial India

by

Reetika Khanna

B.A., Himachal Pradesh University, India

B.M.C., Panjab University, India

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Curriculum Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

November 2017

Abstract

In this thesis, grief is explored as a way of being in teaching. Drawing on Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*, meaning presence or human existence, and informed by the autobiographical approach of *currere,* the author explores grief as an intergenerational phenomenon that occurs as a result of traumatic historical events (Partition 1947), profound personal loss (death of close family members), and the dehumanizing impact of postcolonial education in India. By relating and reflecting on stories from lived experiences, the author illustrates the ways in which the entanglements of family grief and national history can impact a child's educational experience and a teacher's practice. Through memory work, grief reveals itself as burdensome, a weight to be carried; practice is revealed as a site and source of grief. Invoking curriculum as 'a complicated conversation,' the study contends that being in grief is a reality to be embraced and discussed because of its impact on educational relationships. The significance of the thesis lies in acknowledging the intersection of the personal and the professional dimensions of teachers' lives and the manner in which the associated emotions of grief and loss—shame, guilt, numbness, vulnerability, fear, and denial—are lived and worked out in and through pedagogy.

Lay Summary

This thesis explores grief as a way of being in the world as a teacher. Using the autobiographical method, the study demonstrates the manifestation of grief in the classroom and its implications for educational subjects. Grief is characterized in the study as a weight or burden to carry. Grief is an experience of loss: loss experienced by family members rendered refugees in post-Partition India in 1947; loss of self as a result of the dehumanization encountered through postcolonial education; and personal loss in the aftermath of the deaths of close family members. The associated emotions of grief and loss—shame, guilt, numbness, vulnerability, fear, and denial—are studied as lived experiences in and through pedagogical stories. The importance of recognizing and being open to complicated conversations about grief, as a profoundly overwhelming emotion, is asserted.

Preface

This work is the original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Reetika Khanna.

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Acknowledgments

There aren't words enough to thank my advisor, teacher, and mentor, Dr Anne Phelan, whose patience, kindness, compassion, expertise and wisdom I will always cherish and uphold. I am in deep gratitude to Dr Karen Meyer, who understood the value of my work, and encouraged my story writing with her gentleness, expertise and patience. This thesis would not have been possible without the invaluable contribution and conversations with Dr Stefan Honisch, my friend, philosopher, and mentor at UBC. My teachers at UBC: Dr Pinar, Dr Weber, Dr Gouzouasis, Dr Loutzenheiser who contributed to my understanding of my teaching practice. I acknowledge the presence and foresight to Dr Philip Balcaen who initiated my study at UBC and supported me with his constant encouragement.

I owe this study to the love, support and patience of my family: my mother and daughter who waited continents away for me to study, finish, and head home to them. The unconditional love, faith and many engaged and encouraging conversations of my chosen family also called friends, Gargi, Dimple, Preeti, Mrs Pammy Singh, Amrit, Manbeena, have seen me through this journey. I am deeply grateful to Kamaljit Aujala, my best friend and constant companion, whom I met during the last few months of my study, for his patience, support and loving presence during this study.

For those who have left their presence in my life: Dad, Vineet, and Ronit: you are a part of me and always will be. Nani, my grandmother, I honor your grief, losses and stories in this study. To all the students I taught, your faces flashed before me as I wrote our stories from the classroom. It is through you I came into presence as a teacher. For all the teachers, whose work with children becomes their lives, I honor you and the work you do. And to the divine presence that has loved, guided, supported me through all the people I mention above for honoring me and my work.

For all of us who love, belong, lose, long, and grieve... this is for us.

Prologue: Holding Open The Pedagogical Door To Grief

I began teaching in response to an invitation from the principal of the school my daughter attended at the time. I do not have a formal qualification to teach. I chose to continue teaching beyond the duration of the initial offer, spurred by my interest in what was to become a significant part of my life, a compelling force of the school's ethos as well as by my engagement with teaching. I self identify as being in intergenerational grief. Along with that, while teaching, I encountered sudden losses and overwhelming grief in the passing of close family members. I continued to teach in grief without understanding its impact on myself and others. Two years ago, after having taught for about fifteen years, I took a sabbatical to pursue a graduate degree in Canada. I wanted to reflect on my practice and study it deeply; something in the way I taught was persistently calling for my attention though when I began my studies I didn't know what that was.

I have felt weighed down by my grief in my work as a teacher, leading me to feel estranged from teaching. I have had considerable outward success in teaching: good academic results from my students, teaching awards, promotions, curriculum leadership positions, and other kinds of recognition. None of these things seemed satisfying enough. Ultimately, I felt compelled to think about what it means to be a teacher, and to discover new insights about my being a teacher. Since leaving the profession for further study, I have never stopped introducing myself as a teacher, nor have I stopped thinking of myself as one. For me, teaching and reflecting on my teaching practice have become two sides of a pedagogical coin: a way of exploring myself, my being, my relationships with people to whom I feel both close and distant, and with those connected to my work—fellow teachers, administrators, students, and their families. Reflection and introspection have both grown and deepened to a point where I study my practice and make meaning of it and I find that it is about who I am and continue to be and become in the world.

Chapter 1: Introduction To Research

1.1   The Self Who Teaches

I am interested in the 'who' that teaches. By 'who' I seek to understand the being that teaches. I use the Heideggerian concept of *Dasein* to frame my understanding of being, as being particular to me. Heidegger (2010, p. 6) says, "This being which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its being we formulate terminologically as Da-sein". I seek to explore my being in grief and to understand how that impacted my teaching practice. I seek the possibilities of my presence in grief while I taught.

Dasein literally means to be there, or to be present, or existence. My presence while teaching was primarily through my grieving condition. I seek to understand the impact of teaching in grief. In understanding being, I question 'who' and 'how 'of being. The concept of 'who' is usually tied to the question of identity and even though some of my inquiry is about the development of my identity as a new teacher much of it is about the 'how' of 'who'. I inquire into 'who' as the teacher who teaches and 'how' as a teacher who teaches in grief. I study 'how' as subjectivity throughout the thesis. Biesta (2017) says," Both the questions— the question of *who* I am and the question of *how* I am—are of course legitimate questions, also in the context of education" (p. 8). As a teacher teaching through grief, I find both these questions speaking to me through my practice.

Heidegger (2010, p. 10) says, "We come to terms with the question of existence always only through existence itself". My study seeks to make connections with who we are and how that impacts the work we do as teachers, including the educational relations we form with our students. I attempt to understand the meaning we make of our lives with what we do. We make meaning of what we do based on who we are, how we relate to others and the work

we do in the world. Teaching always involves a relationship between self and others. The way to understand teaching and making meaning of it then is a way to understand self and others and self through others.

Teaching is a complex, intricate and complicated practice. And what happens when a teacher going through an intensely complicated emotional process of loss and grieving meets and engages with the complicated practice of teaching? Henderson and Slattery (2004) state, "Educators must "not only think deeply about *what* they teach but about *how* they go about their teaching and *why* they teach in the ways that they do" (p. 1) (emphasis in original). With this perspective, my research will engage through autobiographical narratives, the who of teaching. I explore the ways in which the teaching being surfaces in practice and meets the world. In sifting through the who and how of teaching, Biesta (2017, p. 8) warns that the concepts of identity and subject-ness are not interchangeable and it is also important not to conflate them. While I understand the difference between the concepts of 'who' (being) and 'how' (subjectivity), I will attend to them in way that honors the difference between them and also seek the ways in which they impact each other. I see the two questions sitting across from each other in an engaged conversation about the ways in which they remain in an interlocked relation to each other.

I have come to identify myself as a being in grief. I began teaching in grief, and more loss and grief came relentlessly as I continued to teach. The kind of grief that I explore in this study was overwhelming and numbing by its sheer intensity and magnitude. It had an impact on me and on my presence with the students I taught. Within the complexities of loss and grief in its manifest forms like familial, personal, educational and cultural, I struggled to make meaning out of my professional life and endeavored to separate it from the personal. Grief for me was not to be acknowledged in my practice; in fact, I denied and resisted it with all the strength I could muster at the time. It was a site of my vulnerability and what I

perceived as weakness. I wonder now what place vulnerability has in the classroom and what are the ways in which vulnerability can be expressed and accepted educationally and what that might mean for self and others. The tensions and ambiguities of living with grief placed me in the quest of exploring the question: Who am I as a teacher? I tie this inquiry to a larger discussion of who I am, exploring where and what I have come from, what I did as a teacher and to the latent possibilities within me.

Palmer (1997) talks of the inwardness of teaching as a way in which teachers often project onto their students "convolutions of their inner lives" (pp. 2-3). As a teaching being in grief, I found myself unable to be fully present pedagogically in the classroom. I found it challenging to respond to and fully engage with the students I taught. I found it impossible to meet the students' demands of me. I did not know then, as I do now, that I was teaching in grief. I tried to keep my grieving condition out of what I was doing in the classroom. I did not know that the grip of grief is so powerful that it is quite impossible to make a separation of one's work from a grieving condition. I tried to keep myself from feeling my grief as I worked. I felt myself dehumanized in the lack of acknowledgement of how I felt and that resulted in experience of work that I could not fully understand or appreciate and dehumanization of the students I taught as I failed to recognize their humanness. What I did to myself, I ended up doing to my work and others in my world. This is why I find that the *who* of teaching an important question. Nias (1989) finds that the concept of self is crucial to a proper understanding of how teachers function. Ambiguities around the concepts of a teacher's personal self and professional self provide the starting point for tackling the fundamental question of the *who* in teaching. Equally significant for analytical purposes are the multiple definitions of what it means to be a 'professional'. I understood the separation of the personal from the professional as not letting one impact the other. While I taught in grief, I thought I could keep my personal grief out of the way I taught and encountered others. In

studying how I taught in grief and its impact on my teaching practice, I explore how the personal and professional spaces run almost parallel to each other and I endeavor to embrace and harmonize these two constituents of the teaching self.

Palmer (1997) observes that "seldom, if ever, do we ask the "who" question—who is the self that teaches" (p. 4)? What aspects of ourselves and do we bring into the pedagogical world? And how does this shape our interactions with students? The question of who we are as teachers inhabits, dwells and calls on us cognitively and affectively through sustained reflection. Grumet and McCoy (1997) assert that because "institutions of public life stand in a complex structural and dialectical relationship to the institutions of private life, it becomes necessary to study schools in relationship to ways of life experienced in families..." (p. 2). How teachers experience life has an impact on those they teach. My being in grief impacted my pedagogy in ways that I did not realize. The question of what I was doing as a teacher was inextricably tied to who I was at the time.

As a manifestation of my reflections and inquiry, the thesis will explore three core questions:

1) What does it mean to be a teacher in grief?

2) How does grief manifest in pedagogical practice?

3) What does a teacher's being in the world reveal and conceal about pedagogy?

I study lived experiences of grief and loss as these came persistently throughout my teaching career spanning about fifteen years. The larger purpose of the study is to break through the silence around grief in curriculum and pedagogy, by demonstrating how the complex emotions associated with loss, grief, and intergenerational trauma in teachers' personal lives can impact pedagogical relations and approaches within the classroom. I question the ways in which teachers silence their emotions in practice by keeping the personal and the professional apart. I wonder if this separation is indeed possible. So much of the personal surfaces in conversations, attitudes,

gestures, perceptions, and daily interaction. I attempt to open a conversation about the pedagogy of grief. As teachers, when we resist or deny what we experience in our personal lives, what we have conceal has a way of taking pedagogical forms that we do not truly recognize. I explore the origins and manifestations of grief through autobiographical narratives through this study.

1.2   Child of Grief

I am the child of a grieving family of refugees in India, whose lives, like those of millions of others, were thrown into turmoil in 1947, after India, newly freed of British imperial rule, was partitioned into India and Pakistan. My mother's family belonged to Lahore, which is now in Pakistan. My mother, six years old at the time, with three other siblings, along with their young parents fled overnight in a car to the newly independent and partitioned India, carrying only their most essential belongings. They were warned not to carry any money or valuables as the marauding mobs were looking to loot and kill on both sides of the border. As a result of the political decision to divide India, communal riots and sectarian violence had broken out in a way that had turned peacefully coexisting communities into enemies and strangers. That night my mother and her family lost everything they owned including the place to which they had for generations; they were never to return. They became struggling refugees in their own country, carried their loss and grief within the core of their being, and continued to pass their trauma on to others in the family through intergenerational or multigenerational grief (Danieli, 2010).

I characterize grief as suffering, burden, and the feeling of something weighing one down following loss. Intergenerational grief, also called multigenerational grief, is the conscious and unconscious passing on of the weight and burden of loss within families following a traumatic event. Intergenerational grief courses silently through our beings, and manifests in the way we think and feel about ourselves and others. Almost like a weight, we

carry with us all the time, such grief has shaped our being in ways of which we are not fully aware. Danieli (2010) confirms the universal existence of intergenerational transmission of trauma and its effects, explaining that

> In the past, multigenerational transmission has been treated as a secondary phenomenon, perhaps because it is not as obviously dramatic as the horrific images of traumatized people. The mind recoils when viewing such images; and it does not take in that children not yet born could inherit a legacy and memories not of their own but that, nevertheless, will shape their lives. (p. xv)

Among survivors of intergenerational trauma, it is usual to deny, ignore, or to remain silent about our experiences. This is what (Danieli, 1982) calls a "conspiracy of silence" which increases the difficulty of understanding the past, and of discovering our relationship to events that happened before we were born. Pandey (2001, p.16) similarly says that partition survivors in India ask what the point of telling their children about their tale of suffering as it hs nothing to do with their lives and their problems. Silences around losses and consequent grief have a way of festering like old wounds. Adults feel that talking about their loss and grief will somehow make the past linger and impact others who should not know the trauma associated with it. It is also their effort to protect others in the family by their silence. Despite the silences, grief has way of persisting in being. There are no conversations around losses almost invalidating the losses and numbing grief. The past looms as mysterious and unknowable and sometimes our family legacies get buried in silences, pain, suffering and lack of meaning making from losses and traumatic events.

Having heard the silences of my family's losses and witnessed their grief, I believe one of the ways to deal with legacies of loss is to open a conversation about them. My belief is that engaging with grief is one of the ways of embracing it and accepting our losses and accompanying emotions. Although I could feel the burden of grief as a child and a young

adult, I could only recognize it as grief after personal tragedy struck with the passing of my

husband, father and brother during a span of ten years, while I was working as a teacher.

Grief became real and tangible instead of obscure and mysterious. The pain and suffering of

lived personal tragedy were greater in intensity and were sharply defined, instead of existing

in the shadows, cast into silence, or relived in stories of yearning and longing. In my own

case, I have struggled to understand the genesis of my grief through stories I heard from the

adults in my family, about their loss and grief both during British rule in India, and in the

violent aftermath of independence and partition. Danieli (2010) observes that "children

became captive audiences with whom adults share their experiences, especially when the

latter face deafening silence from other adults who have failed to acknowledge their

traumatic stories" (p. 5). Sometimes children become natural receptacles into whom the

adults put their emotions even in silences. My grandmother's pained sighs, tear-laced eyes

and far way looks said more than words could articulate. Her aging mother and five siblings

chose to remain in Pakistan and later migrated to England but they never met again after

that night in August 1947.

My thesis is an attempt not to capture grief in its elemental form, but rather to bring

out my being in grief as it manifested in my own work as a teacher, encountering children in

the classroom, and interacting frequently with my colleagues, and with the families of

students. I had one guiding reason to choose the narratives presented in what follows: how

do these accounts reveal and conceal my pedagogical history and self? Understanding this

question and its inherent complexities brought me to a deeper understanding of my work as a

teacher and my engagement with students whom I taught. Palmer (2007) reminds us that we

teach from ourselves, and it is in recognition of this insight, one which I have come to share,

that I have chosen these moments from my life. Through the careful retrieval and

arrangement of autobiographical experiences in the chapters that follow, pedagogy emerges

as a site where I experienced its many contrasts and complications and its inherent tensions. For me, the shadowy presence of a self has emerged within the context of an intergenerational loss of identity experienced by those of my mother and grandmother's generations who witnessed partition, and of my generation, living in postcolonial India.

Grief makes lived experience a burden. Attig (2001) writes that grieving is "involved, intricate, confused, complex, compound, the opposite of simple" (p. 33). When loss is intangible, individuals may not recognize their grief. Grief can be lived, even if the actual experience of grieving is not known, and therefore not understood. Attig (2001) goes on to explain that, "as we grieve, we relearn a complex world" (p. 33). In reflecting upon my own experiences, I wonder how do we know and learn when we live in ambiguous grief without recognizing this circumstance? Heidegger (1988) explains that "we meet with being's being in the understanding of being. It is understanding that opens up or, as we say, discloses or reveals something like being" (p. 18). The recognition of one's own grief comes with time and perhaps careful study and understanding. For me, this understanding came when I removed myself from my grieving spaces and people—my home and my mother, when I came to study at the University of British Columbia in Canada. It was the question: who am I as a teacher? that I could not extricate from who am I in being? It brought me to the understanding of my being in grief and this study of teaching in a grieving condition. Until I could trace the origins of my being in grief, I could not develop a fulsome understanding of my being. The kind of grief that I explore in this thesis is various—intergenerational postcolonial and personal.

1.3   Coming into Presence

The grief I experienced, and continued to experience all the while I taught, both revealed and concealed itself in my practice. I taught at a newly founded, progressive, co -educational, private K-12-day school, Soorya High (pseudonym), in the northern plains of

India. It was a school that made the maternalistic pedagogy of care and nurturance its primary ethos. I had been educated and raised for most of my formative years in New England Girls School (pseudonym), a boarding school in the hills of North India founded by British colonists in the 1800s; later, after the colonial rulers left, the church runs the school, maintaining colonial traditions including its characteristic paternalistic pedagogy of fear and distance and Christian values. The contrasting pedagogies and ethos' of the two schools brought my ways of knowing and being into stark relief. Soorya High was the site where my being in grief came into presence as I encountered warmth and a certain intimacy among teachers and students, something I found challenging to appreciate and participate in. The difference I encountered clashed with my ideas of teaching and discipline as learned in New England Girls School. I use 'coming into presence' as used by Biesta (2004) as a framework for understanding myself as a teacher and my pedagogy through plurality and difference. I understand 'coming into presence' as a way of showing up in difference among others. It is a particular way in which a person shows up relationally. On the first day of my teaching practice, as a 'new' teacher at Soorya High, the ways in which I knew, felt, thought and started practicing with was evidently different the way most of the teachers there practiced. I came into presence in two ways, the first as a teacher and then as teacher in difference and in grief. I look upon both these instances of presence as responsibilities that I came upon on that day. Coming upon responsibilities may not suggest that I necessarily willingly took them on or understood them. While I did choose to continue teaching, I did not fully understand and engage with being a teacher and a pedagogue until much later when I started questioning what I was doing and what it meant for me and others.

Aoki (2005) draws out the layered voices in teaching that speak uncanny truths "from the surface to the place where teaching truly dwells" (p. 188). I find these voices coming as if from existential spaces, asking: who are we? and what are we doing? I found these questions

dwelling in spaces of absence, disconnected from some stabilizing sense of who we are. Aoki (2005) writes of the "beingness of teaching" (p. 191). Who is the being that teaches? Bringing together Aoki's approach with key aspects of Heidegger's philosophical work on our existence in the world, I witness the figure of the "being that teaches" gesturing toward a human way of being (Dasein) of the teacher. I question the ways I was present as a teacher and the ways in which I was not able to be present being in grief. The teacher's being comes into presence (Biesta, 1999, 2001) through the different manifestations of humanity her students bring into the classroom. Coming into presence through difference is a relational, intersubjective space (Biesta, 2004, p. 62) in which we see, hear, and are called to ourselves and others.

Aoki (2005) recalls an incident from his childhood concerning Mr. McNab, his teacher at Fanny Bay School, British Columbia. In early April 1942, Mr. McNab watched his sad Japanese students leaving school, as they, like thousands of other Japanese-Canadian citizens were sent to internment camps in the interior of BC. Aoki's memory of McNab watching helplessly as his students were forcibly removed from their place of learning, stays with him as a pedagogical moment through his lifetime, a lingering image of a teacher thoughtfully watching over the students, while at the same time, powerless to stop them from experiencing deep injustice, systematic racism, xenophobia, and the paranoia of wartime Canada. In my view, the moment of pedagogical watchfulness was transformative for Mr. McNab. The teacher was transformed pedagogically by the presence of the departing students. Who was Mr. McNab in that moment? In his silence and thoughtful presence, he reveals something of his being even as other parts of his being are concealed. Looking over at the departing students brought him into presence in a deeply moving moment at school affirming Biesta's (2006) idea of coming into presence through plurality and difference (p. 47). In being with children, we often encounter those vulnerable and tender spaces that we

conceal when in the presence of other adults. We come into presence with children through our differences from them.

I used the pedagogy of distance and discipline at Soorya throughout my time there. Although the difference between both schools was obvious and most times a space of tension, ambiguity, uncertainty and dilemma for me, I rarely if ever questioned it. I was learning to teach to help students get good results and at the same time I found myself being unable to remove myself from ways of postcolonial pedagogical knowing. Biesta (2004) says, "While learning as acquisition is only about getting more and more, learning as responding is about showing who you are and where you stand" (p. 79). Asking the difficult question of who we are as teachers and who we want to become compels our recognition that every moment is a moment of becoming. Biesta (2004) suggests that we are constantly being challenged by otherness and difference.

I study my pedagogical history, my encounters with otherness and difference, in the postcolonial history and attitudes of India, where I was born and raised with what I encountered at Soorya High. My postcolonial schooling adds another layer of complexity to my being a teacher in grief. I carry the burden of postcolonial education in a way that it wounded me and in turn caused me to be hurtful to the students I taught. It is a burden I carry and therefore I characterize it as my grief. I carried this way of knowing and being so deeply and strongly in my psyche that it caused me no consternation for the longest time. Almost as if every rationale and justification could be given for what did not feel right to experience as a student myself and similarly to think and to do in teaching.

Postcolonial education in India, some thirty years after independence of the country, was still rooted in some dehumanizing spaces and paternalistic colonial pedagogies and attitudes, mostly characterized by fear, distance, discipline and order. I experienced such education at New England Girls School, where my mother worked as an estate manager. The

lines between my home and school were blurred as much as the line between my mother as staff of the school and my primary caregiver. The contrasting pedagogies of Soorya High and New England Girls were brought into my presence as I taught and struggled to unlearn what I knew as a student and what I was expected to do as a teacher. This became my site of resistance, tension and ambiguity.

The complicated part of my formative years was pedagogy as a gendered space located in a contradiction. Most of the adult women in my life as a child—my mother, grandmother, aunts, (most of whom where teachers themselves) and teachers—practiced the paternalistic pedagogy, coming from colonial and postcolonial ways of knowing and being. Most of these women were impacted by grief, which added another layer of complication. This complicated and contradictory pedagogical space was formative to my knowing and being. I inquire into these spaces of contradiction, lingering loss and its accompanying feelings of grief to understand the loss of self in education, and how such loss is carried forward through intergenerational trauma and grief, in the thesis. I attempt to study the way being in grief impacted me as a child, and then as an adult, and subsequently as a pedagogue.

I explore and question grief now as I revisit my work as a teacher after a two-year sabbatical from the classroom. I have come to recognize my being in grief within the last few years, and, since then, I have tried to explore the source of my pain, its manifestation, and how it has impacted my work as a teacher. I must emphasize here that grief became transparent for me, allowing me to peer within myself to understand my lived experiences through sustained reflection on loss, and trauma. In similar fashion, Heidegger (2010) argues that "to work out the question of being means to make a being—one who questions—transparent in its being" (p. 6). It is my endeavour through this thesis to seek out the teacher in grief that I have been through seeking grief as it was lived, the ways it manifested for me in the everyday classroom and the way pedagogy worked both in bringing grief home to me

and also making me come into presence as a teaching being in grief. I do this by means of autobiographical narratives.

1.4   Storying the Self

Stories have been a formative pedagogical influence on me since childhood, and it is through story-telling that my thesis emerges, unfolds, asks, and searches for answers. My stories bear the influence of those I heard from the first pedagogues I knew in my home, including family members, friends of my parents, and other adults within my family's orbit. In writing my stories, I am looking to find connections to the way I taught and how that spoke to the being I am, to understand how my personal lived experiences have shaped me as a person and influenced the work I do as a teacher. There is a sense in which the actual stories I share simultaneously conceal and reveal the core of my inquiry. My concern is not primarily with the outward form of my narratives, whether extended or brief, but rather with what they enable me to learn about my practice and humanity—the significance of the insights they offer. Humanity for people impacted by colonial and postcolonial ways of knowing and being is a complex idea. Fashioned as we are, after the colonist's idea of who we are, it becomes challenging to question the ways in which we envison our humanity and the ways in which we have accepted certain dehumanized practices in education. For this reason, I will study my own being has been shaped and formed as a postcolonial boarding school student, through my life as a teacher immersed in postcolonial ways of knowing and being, and how each of these dimensions of my being-in-the-world have unfolded in the face of grief, and loss.

Autobiographical stories honour our engagement with ourselves and the world through narrative self-knowing and self-understanding. Pinar (1975) called this inquiry *currere*, which in Latin means running a course. Such an inquiry runs the course of how meaning is grasped through temporality and experience or of working and being. More

recently Pinar (2011) has "refocused autobiography from self study to self expressivity through academic knowledge directed to, informed by, the world" (p. xiii). A big part in knowing ourselves in through our lived experiences. These have a way of constantly informing our perceptions and subjectivities. Pinar (1975) writes that

> In all likelihood, one is in the past while in the present. The present is then veiled; the past is manifest and apparent, however, so transparently present that it is veiled, and one assumes oneself to be in the present when one is not. To ascertain where one is, when one is, one must locate the past. (p. 22)

Honoring the experiential levels which are central to my inquiry, I do not seek smooth transitions between different memories and moments in my life, nor do I find it either helpful or necessary to try and capture every detail of these experiences. Indeed, much of what I remember is inflected by loss, grief, and pain, and casting my mind over these experiences for this thesis has been a difficult process. It may very well be that certain experiential details have been forgotten with the passage of time, but it is also true that certain things are too painful, too fraught, and laden with meaning to be recalled in full. My stories constitute an attempt to make the numb, absent spaces present, to dig through the layers of concealment, to seek out the hiding places, and to search the unknown that was never forgotten. The autobiographical narratives create a path for me to engage with myself as a teacher and as a human being and the way in which my practice is shaped.

1.5   Chapter Summaries

Chapter One **Introduction To Research Study** explicates the reasons and purpose of the study and foregrounds loss and grief as silent, silenced, invisible, and concealed dimensions of practice and pedagogical experience.

Chapter Two **Understanding Being** explores the philosophic framework of Being(*Dasein*) and being-in the-world in grief, coming into presence as a teacher and the

understanding of being through practice and pedagogy. I discuss the use of autobiographical narratives as a method to construct and inform my lived experiences at home, in the classroom and in pedagogical encounters.

Chapter Three **Understanding Grief** studies grief primarily as a lived experience. I navigate the study of grief through disciplines and its silence in education. I study the scholarly research on grief in its impact culturally, in families, personally and educationally.

Chapter Four **Understanding Intergenerational Grief and Pedagogy** continues the exploration of grief in one of its most significant manifestation for me, intergenerational grief. I narrate stories of haunting losses and grief of my mother and her family and I bring that familiar yet strange dwelling place into the first day as a teacher and how grief manifested for me in the classroom. I explore the possibility of transformation as I come into presence as a human being and a teacher among the students I teach.

Chapter Five **Understanding Grief And Loss Through Postcolonial Education** explicates my history as a postcolonial citizen of India. It explores the wounds of harsh discipline, fear, distance in schooling and at home. I carry the same dehumanized aspects of myself into my teaching. I narrate stories from my boarding school, its ethos on strictness and discipline and its strong, forbidding walls and postcolonial attitudes. I pull into view the discourses of postcoloniality and its consequent impact on pedagogy and education. I navigate between the spaces of my own practice and that of my history of schooling. I attempt to explore the ways in which the entanglements of family grief and national history can inform and impact a teacher's practice.

In Chapter Six **Understanding My Teaching Practice** I seek to understand pedagogy in spaces of fear, guilt, shame, distance, resistance and presence and absence. I question the personal and professional sites of a practice and find the separation of the two in spaces of

being and grief an impossibility. I narrate two stories to show ways in which my past pedagogical experiences surface as I teach.

Chapter Seven **Conclusion: Listening To Self** concludes the study with the exploration of estrangement in the lived experiences of being a teacher and studies the way distancing and viewing teaching practice as a stranger causes a perceptual shift in the way meaning can be made from practice. The act of listening completes the story of my practice by honoring it with presence.

Chapter 2: Understanding Being

This chapter identifies my being in the world through grief. I work to make sense of the loss and grief which dwell in my being. My earliest memories as a child have been of weight, a burden I felt I was carrying. I characterize grief as a heaviness, a weight to be carried and a burdensome way to live. Other than as a daily feeling of weariness, I could not recognize what this sense of burden was until a few months into my graduate study in Canada. The distance from the site of my grief: home, family, culture, educational environments both where I taught and where I studied may have caused me to see grief in a way that was less immersed and absorbed although the weight of it continued to be felt. With the sabbatical from teaching, I could view it from a distance in an objective way and perceive it differently. I was able to consider my being in grief in the ways it encountered teaching practice that I had not considered before. I use Heidegger's work to explore the concept of being. I must state here, however, that I have chosen only those concepts that speak to me and my inquiry. I have not studied his work in its entirety.

2.1   *Dasein* and Presence

I begin with the concept of *Dasein* which refers to the human way of existing in the everyday world (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 13). Being in the world also refers to the very way the world exists through us. *Dasein* in its most straightforward sense refers to being human. It literally means being there, or presence, or existence. This being human is something we take for granted in our everyday lives and interactions. What do we mean when we want to understand being or being human?

For Heidegger (2010), "already when we ask, 'What is being?' we stand in an understanding of the 'is' without being able to determine conceptually what the 'is' means" (p. 4). We already live in the understanding of being, although we may not be aware of it. I have explored my own being. Upon careful and intense study over several months, I came

upon the realization of my own experiences of grief as a way of being in the world. My existence and presence has been primarily through the burden of grief I have carried. It was perhaps the weight of the burden that I seemed to carry that led me to start asking questions. Heidegger (2010) has observed that "beings are, so to speak, interrogated with regard to their being. But if they are to exhibit the characteristics of their being without falsification they must for their part have become accessible in advance as they are in themselves" (p. 5). I came to the realization of my *Dasein* (Being) when I moved out of the place of my grief— my home—and away from the people who made it present—my family—when I came to study in Canada. King (2001) explains that "Dasein is thrown into and delivered over to the being which is his and which has to be" (p. 30). When I started to study the genesis of my being in grief, I realized my being in grief is almost like a fact when viewed historically, as I describe in a later chapter. Yet the grief I experienced was abstract in a certain sense in the denial of the acknowledgement and recognition of it, which I also explicate in detail later.

Heidegger (2010) suggests that *Dasein* understands itself in terms of those beings and their being which it itself is not and against those it encounters in its world. As I started teaching, I encountered the school started by four women educationists with its ethos on nurturing care for the students, as a griefless space. My being in grief contrasted sharply with the warmth, intimacy and informality between teachers and students. Heidegger (2010) asserts that "what is ontically nearest and familiar is ontologically the farthest, unrecognized and constantly overlooked in its ontological significance" (p. 41). I could not understand the reason for my discomfort with the pedagogy prevalent at Soorya High, I resisted it and looked down at it and preferred to teach and be with students as I had known from my own teachers at New England School. I could not understand why the school founders' thought of disrupting pedagogical practices that had been in place and worked educationally to discipline children and get good results. I pushed back against the ethos of the school and did

not find myself alone, in fact there were quite a few teachers like me who seemed particularly challenged by the 'soft' pedagogies of the school. My *Dasein* was being revealed in ways that I was not aware at the time.

Dasein, therefore, is not self-evident and demands careful examination. The concept of "being in the world" speaks to a worldly human existence in three distinct ways as Heidegger (2010) explains,

Da-sein is my own, to be always in this or that way. It has somehow always already decided in which way Da-sein is always my own. The being which is concerned in its being about its being is related to its being as its truest possibility. Da-sein is always its possibility. (p. 40)

I understand that *Dasein* is mine. In the awareness of *Dasein*, there is choice, to be or not to be in a given way. *Dasein* belongs to itself, realises itself and creates for itself opportunities to be or not to be. *Dasein* is not just objectively present in the world, it may in fact seek out the world to be present in it. In a way, then, our being is shaped by the world and also shapes others in the world. *Dasein* is a responsibility that I have for myself and for others in my world. It is by way of a sense of responsibility to the work I do as a teacher that I now explore my being in grief.

2.2   Being In

As a child, I remember there was no apparent sense of loss, but there was a sense of something weighing me down. Thomas (2017, p. ii) similarly understands grief as "that which presses heavily upon us." Some have likened grief to a rock, and some have pointed to a hole in their hearts. I feel it as a burden, a crushing weight, something I carry with me constantly. I attribute this feeling to an invisible but ever present intergenerational grief and also to my experience of personal tragedies with the untimely and unexpected passing of my husband, father and brother. Moure (2009) writes about the grief she felt on her mother's

death, "I don't feel angry, but I feel sad. As sad as loam, as heavy as the felled trunk of a tree" (p. 246).

The weight for me gets heavier when I witness the grief of others around me, especially my mother. I speak of my mother and her family in this thesis because of our close familial bonds, something we did not have on my father's side of the family. I remember my father mostly as a physical absence because he was in the armed forces and frequently posted to border districts inaccessible to families. Shortly before retirement he had developed a critical heart and lung condition. He would come home during his vacations, which did not coincide with our own school holidays. My brother and I were primarily in the care of our mother. I grew up feeling greatly responsible and sensitive to my mother's grief, in many ways protecting her from my own feelings of distress. Our relationship thus came to be characterized by a certain distance wherein we each perhaps did not want to hurt the other by our closeness to grief. Communication was a casualty in our relationship. Enclosed within our own private spaces of grief, we became silent and absent in our presence to each other. What does it mean to be in grief? Heidegger (2010) offers a helpful perspective from which to work through this question:

> Initially, we supplement the expression being-in with the phrase 'in the world,' and are inclined to understand this being-in as 'being-in something.' With this term, the kind of being of a being is named which is "in" something else, as water is 'in' the glass, the dress is 'in' the closet. By this 'in' we mean the relation of being that two beings extended 'in' space have to each other with regard to their location in that space… The objective presence 'in' something objectively present, the being objectively present together with something having the same kind of being in the sense of a definite location relationship are ontological characteristics which we call

categorial. They belong to beings whose kind of being is unlike Dasein.

(Heidegger, 2010, p. 50)

It is in this ontological sense of an "objective presence" that grief has touched every aspect and dimension of my life and it has coloured my life world, and my world view. I grew up surrounded by adults in grief. At home, it was my mother and during vacations at my mother's parents' home, it was my grandparents and their other children – all of whom had been a part of the traumatic night of loss in 1947. The melancholy of both the homes manifested in a pervasive heaviness and silences or awkwardness that made trauma and loss linger. I have wondered if grief is a location and I have come to understand that it might be in certain ways. Removed from my space of grief, my home, family, culture and educational sites, I was able to understand and embrace it differently.

In seeking *Dasein*, we seek to understand it. We also risk losing ourselves when we do not seek ourselves actively, and when we are unwilling to engage fully with who we are. King (2001) explains that we lose ourselves to the things we meet in our world (p. 13). Whatever comes our way, we accept largely without question, without a sense of having choice, almost as though we have had a responsibility thrust upon us. At least this has often been the case with me. There have been several roles and responsibilities I have encountered throughout my life, some of my choosing, and some beyond my control. At times, I have quietly fulfilled my responsibilities, without ever fully engaging with or understanding them. I have found myself in circumstances where my lived experiences are characterized by unreflective, functional activity, and by a total denial of imagination and critical thought. What is this space in my being that makes me numb, that makes me feel disengaged from what I do? I am looking for my being within all that I have become, all that I am, and all that I am becoming through what I do.

In knowing ourselves and our worlds, we articulate our experiences and our stories of being and knowing through language. Huebner (1967) conceptualizes Being through the medium of language, which the self uses to make meaning with itself, and with the others it encounters in the world. Deeper connections to the self are made through the narratives we tell of our lived experiences. Fundamental to this approach is the insight that language becomes a way through which we know ourselves in the world, what Heidegger (1983) calls the house of Being. In making meaning of our being, we tell stories and interpret them to seek unity and coherence, and to discover all that lies below the surface of the stories themselves, spaces of both exploration and of possibility. In asking what it is to be, my goal is to understand both the question itself, and to ask another question: what is the question of Being as the search for existence (Heidegger, 2010)? The question of Being radiates existentiality, and existential questions inhabit, or so I am told, a crisis. I inhabit the dimensions of an existential crisis and for this reason, I wish to explore both existential questions, and their attendant crises.

Beings come into presence through others in the world (Biesta, 2006). This horizon of difference and plurality creates the world from which we make meaning of what is around us, and helps shape the contexts within which we understand things as they are. We view the world through the world we live in and make meaning of it and our own existence. Teachers come to understand themselves and their everyday world through the work they do within their school communities. I was no different.

2.3   Presencing Newness

With the invitation to teach at Soorya High, I assumed a position and privilege that almost immediately overwhelmed me as I entered my first classroom of the first day. I came into presence as a new teacher through difference and plurality (Biesta, 2004).

As a newcomer to the profession of teaching, by turns raw, reluctant, and recalcitrant, I came into presence because I thought, felt, and practiced differently from other teachers. I now look at this recognition of difference, in retrospect, as a "coming into presence," but at the time it was both discomforting and troubling. I had yet to make meaning of my decision to teach and understand the full implications of a teaching practice. I was also constantly using my own schooling as a reference point in my practice even though it was an experience of wounding. Fels (2010, p. 6) says students and teachers reveal and conceal who they are their desires, longings, betrayals and vulnerabilities. The possibilities of being who we are and becoming who we want to become, play out in the engagement and interactions or lack of them in the classroom. As a teacher, my being and my being in the world were being revealed through my relationality with others. As Biesta (2014) explains "what is crucial about the event of 'coming into presence' is that this is not something that can be done in isolation" (p. 143). The invitation to teach, and my joining the school community brought into my life the gifts of presence, being, and becoming. In the differences between what I had known and practiced and what the school expected of me, there was no distrust; rather there was the freedom to act and be open. I had the opportunity as a teacher at Soorya High to engage with my practice and the students in a way that I thought suitable. This space of freedom and trust was new and compelling for me educationally and some of my dilemmas and ambiguities emerged as a result. Postcolonial education, such as the one I had, did not encourage critical thought and action. Teachers used books to teach and whatever the book said was learnt and reproduced in assignments and examinations.

Soorya High, when I was first handed the freedom to decide how I wanted to teach, it was almost an overwhelmingly confusing space. In a later development, the school principal gave us the liberty to remove books from our teaching and choose the texts we as teachers thought suitable for the students and we were encouraged to engage in conversations with

students and their parent to prepare a list of age and grade suitable texts for our classes. This kind of freedom and trust felt simultaneously unfamiliar and empowering. For the first time, I encountered a responsibility and a particularly strong sense of belonging to my work at the same time I felt much pressure in what I considered a risk and vulnerability. The risk of decision making and the vulnerability of not knowing how. It was my first experience of encountering self in the curriculum.

2.4   *Currere*

Currere, the infinitive form of the noun curriculum, makes the transition from curriculum as a set of objectives and outcomes to be achieved and delivered to understanding educational experience as a process of self evolution (Doll Jr., 2017). It is the deeper engagement I bring to myself as a person when I reflect on the ways I engage with learning and teaching. Pinar (1975, p. 20) calls it the willingness to impartially describe the relation between professional work and personal work to see if they can indeed be connected or separated, as lived not as believed or predecided. The word *currere* shares the same etymological root as the word curriculum. It is an engagement with curriculum in subjective presence. *Currere* in the verb form, means running a course. Grumet (2017, p. 82) writes, "*Currere*, the experience of running a course, was a method and a metaphor". It invites us to feel and think instead of only knowing what we teach. Grumet (2017, p.81) sees *currere* as a celebration of presence. Pinar (1975) emphasizes that it is an attempt to understand the contribution of his formal academic studies to the understanding of his life (p. 19). In this sense then, *currere* is an invitation to be present in educational experiences. More recently Pinar (2017, p. 196) writes, "The politics of education requires us to be present, known and named." It is an invitation for continuous, engaged conversation however complicated and challenging it may be. Pinar (2017) thinks of running the course requiring muscles of care, conviction and commitment expressed through study and teaching. I find that it also needs

courage. It requires courage to be present, known and named, to tell our stories and to give voice to the silences in education.

An important paradigmatic shift in Pinar's work is that *currere* defines curriculum as a process rather than an object. As Pinar (2010) explains, from this viewpoint, "curriculum ceases to be a thing, and it is more than a process: it becomes a verb, an action, a social practice, a private meaning, and a public hope" (p. 178). Curriculum, from this perspective, can be richly understood as a doing, thinking, feeling space beyond textbooks, lesson plans, teaching objectives, learning outcomes, assessments and report writing. He goes on to explain, "Autobiography becomes the theory practice for emphasizing one's own lived experience, enabling the individual to exist apart from institutional life, creating distance from the everyday for the sake of self-reflection and understanding" (pp. xii-xiii). *Currere* becomes a process of engaging with oneself through one's lived experiences educationally.

The unthinking, unengaged, unquestioned spaces were seeking themselves in reflection. I position myself in historical moments to explore my being and attend to the social, educational and cultural spaces to inquire and attune myself as a being in the world. Pinar (2015) knows, "Study is the medium not only of knowledge but of subject formation, as one comes to form as a person through what one experiences when studying texts of various kinds, including everyday life" (p. xii). It may be no coincidence, therefore, that my realization and understanding of my being-in-grief began with the onset of my graduate studies. It was my first engaged space of study. I was looking at understanding what I had experienced.

Currere permits teachers to develop self-understanding, which include educational experiences, pedagogical encounters and pedagogical ways of knowing and being. By narrating our experiences, we can understand what has shaped us and our practice. *Currere* becomes a strategy to understand our relationship with ourselves and the world. It is an

opportunity for reflection to understand who I am through who I have been to inform who I will be. It is an intricate, intense and complicated curricular conversation that transforms experiences into productive knowledge which helps us to develop as human beings and teachers.

2.5   Autobiographical Narratives

My inquiry unfolds primarily through the close analysis of autobiographical narratives based on my work as a teacher in postcolonial India. In telling my story autobiographically, I land in a strange but not entirely unfamiliar place, and find educational pathways through lived experiences of distance, grief, and the embodiment of pedagogy as both response to, and resistance against colonization.

In narrating my stories, I attempt to understand my being-in-grief and give shape and meaning to my teaching practice in grief. These stories are the spaces through which I enter the world and interpret it and permit the world to know the ways in which I know it. Stories become a site where I know myself and also rediscover myself constantly. Insight emerges, perhaps, due to the shifting quality of one's perception of oneself over time or maybe the shift in the way the story is narrated. Although these are stories of the way I experienced life, I find it difficult to characterize myself. In contrast, Leggo (2011) perceives himself as a quasi-fictional character in his writing: "I am both present and not present; or more accurately, I witness a person who is both me and not me (p. 47). I find myself unable to see and witness myself as a character in the stories I tell. I find grief has become a character with its constant, looming presence in my life. I find grief being in me such a constant, that grief becomes me. I have wondered what I might be without grief. Grief perhaps chose me to tell it. I find myself the medium through which grief makes itself present and tells its story.

The stories presented in the chapters of this thesis are all drawn from the contexts of my lived experiences in postcolonial India. When adults tell their stories to children, as mine

did to me, and as I did to the students I taught, there is a certain absorbed vulnerability they seek both to show and to hide. Midsentence pauses and abrupt endings are indicative of secrets, and silences. Pitt (2000) observes that "our entry into the social world where we undertake the strange work of inventing ourselves as a story, is always haunted by loss" (p. 84). Along with the stories we tell, we must also know those we deny and those we lost— intentionally or otherwise. This much we owe to ourselves. Strong-Wilson (2008) suggests that "storied formation comes about through deposits of stories heard, read and experienced..." (p. 3). The way we contain ourselves and the way stories contain us changes as we make meaning out of telling them and keeping them as a part of our memories. The past imprints our lives with recollections of sights, sounds, smells invoking some experiences as never fully in the past (King, 2000, p. 2). We carry the past constantly with us as we move through the present. Experiences that become a part of our identity remain as past, present and future. The concept of self emerging from incidents and experiences is dependent on the assumptions about the function and process of memory and the kind of access it gives us to the past (King, 2000). Stories provide a dimension of knowing and being for the self.

Tell me a story, my daughter, between one and two years old, used to say in her child-like, prattling way, even when she was unable to form the words properly at bedtime. *Tell us your stories*, my students in the high school where I taught would say, as I unfroze my narratives in the classroom. It was my first intimate pedagogical contact with them, one that I came to enjoy. Stories showed me a path to myself and provided a gateway to others whom I struggled to encounter otherwise. The rapt attentive faces, my animated voice, years of theatrical experience, the wonder and amazement. as though opening the door to someone we never knew. Reading one of the narratives in an earlier draft of this chapter, Dr. Karen Meyer said *I want to know more…* I thought about my story and then thought of myself as story and I kept going back to the story of the story. Sometimes there is no more story in the story and

sometimes the story begs more of you. In narrating a story, I stand already transformed from inarticulated lived experiences to words and metaphors I can look at, watch, relive and perhaps re-imagine. Some stories live more in silences. Telling them here put me in a double bind, do I honor their silences or do I give voice to them? I sustain these now silent voices through the stories I tell. In the same moment, I get excited about the demand for stories as I feel the pressure of telling them.

Strong-Wilson (2008) likens "cherished stories" to "rubbing stones" (p. 1). I find a story to tell, and I chafe in telling some stories I feel compelled to share. Collected from everywhere stories like stones, fondly examined and rubbed along the textures and lines and then put away to find again. I did not however, tell the story of my grief until now. Bowering (2009) explains that "even some highly successful writers, cannot write their grief, while others can tell about their being in the world that a loved one left" (p. 14). It is difficult to write about our experiences of grief, and yet, it is precisely this difficulty that may be understood to heighten the urgency of giving voice to our personal lived experiences within education.

2.6   Why these Stories?

Some of the stories contained in this thesis did not want to be told. Their resistance comes from the grief they bear. Yet this is precisely why I share these stories here. Grief not shared festers like a raw wound, unable to heal. Grief seeks presence of the self and the other. Despite their reluctance, some of these narratives seek a narrator; someone who can come out of the shadows of the night, bearing witness to their being. Some of the stories that I have chosen to share dwell behind fortifying walls, while others are to be found in a tin of sweets. Much as I enjoy telling them, it is not the stories I seek as much as the experience of telling them. Each time I narrate the story of my grief, I can look at it and see it in new light. Although some stories exist hauntingly in silences and pained sighs. I pay the price of risk in

telling them and also the risk of disclosing my being. When I lay the stories side by side and recount and recoil, I discover forgotten, untold, buried, parts of lives and histories hardly anyone has visited in a long time. Who do we know ourselves as? What do we know of ourselves? Why would be seeking to uncover who we are when that is the very thing we want to lay to rest? "Stories invite us to come to know the world and our place in it" write Witherell and Noddings (1991, p. 13). And what about the stories that are neither inviting, nor greeted by a hospitable world? These stories suffer the grief of not knowing and not being wanted. In peeling off these stored layers that hurt and burn, I might be causing more pain, more grief. Beyond silences there is numbing pain. And there is belonging to it. We belong to our pain in ways that we often do not know ourselves. And what is there to life if we do not know who we are becoming? I seek to uncover this silenced, painful identity through my own lived experience and of the experiences of those who have lived in pain and suffering. As Leggo (2011) understands, "we know ourselves in images, written in words and light" (p.

47). Indeed, there is light through the stories we choose to tell. Although I choose to know and make meaning of myself and my work through stories, autobiography as a research method and process has raised several questions.

The problem is usually with self being the source of data with no verifiable premise for truth, accurateness and validation. The analysis of self-generated data by the autobiographer is a cause for concern among critics of autobiographical inquiry. Issues of objectivity, trust, solipsism etc. are rife in the field of autobiographical/ narrative research. . Tenni, Smythe and Boucher (2003) say, "The creation of good data in autobiographical research and the generation of rich material replete with issues for analysis cannot happen, unless the researcher is prepared to engage strongly and deeply with what is going on for them as they are immersed in the data gathering and analysis process. This means we need to develop a process for internal dialogue with ourselves (p.4). They propose "a physical,

emotional and intellectual" (p. 4) engagement with the data. Despite the concerns, the undeniable truth is that just as the writers of autobiographical writing have grown so have the readers. This is perhaps best described by Olney (1972) autobiography "is the most appealing form of literature that most immediately and deeply engages our interest and holds it and in the end, seems to mean the most because it brings an increased awareness through an understanding of another life in another time and place, of the nature of our own selves and our share in the human condition" (p.vii). It is perhaps for the possibility of understanding and transformation of self that autobiographical inquiry has an enduring place and value in educational studies and research. My choice for autobiographical method for teaching in grief was primarily because grief is a very personal and extremely subjective condition.

A two-year sabbatical devoted to pursuing graduate studies and constant reflection on my practice has led me to appreciate the significance of my teacher being shaped through grief, and the significance of understanding the way I perceive professional practice and pedagogical encounters. I have come to understand the deeper meaning of the ambiguity in practice, unsure, uncertain pedagogical encounters, uncertainty towards my role as a teacher and the continual interplay of the personal in professional spaces. Physical and emotional distance from my home, family and school in India has, in retrospect, guided my inquiry into how teaching has both revealed and concealed my being-in-the-world. A fulsome appreciation of the honor I feel in identifying myself as a teacher has awakened within me a growing realization of the value of pedagogy.

Having made my entry into pedagogy, I find myself unable to extricate myself from its vocation. Existentially, the questions of my being and identity as a teacher have nudged me towards an ongoing inquiry into who I am and who I was as a teacher, and who I continue to be as a person. These questions of identity and selfhood are ultimately inseparable from how I teach students in the classroom. To inquire into who we are as teachers in this fashion

is not to risk losing the world, but rather to participate in its making and remaking, along with our students, colleagues, and others who inhabit our immediate and more distant educational communities.

Teaching myself to teach, learning how to both learn and to unlearn, situating myself within pedagogical encounters of one kind or another, being in grief and experiencing moments of deep uncertainty have brought me closer to the revelatory significance of my being in the world. The thesis negotiates spaces of my being from which I have long been numbed and brings me to a deeper understanding of who I am, where I have come from and how that has implicated me in practice and pedagogy. I situate my claim to being a teacher upon a foundation of everyday practice and pedagogical encounters that have sometimes contrasted with, and at other times, complemented my being in the world. The necessity of knowing myself as a teacher came from the absences that became looming large in the later years of my practice. The negotiation of teacher identity and being in the world draws me into a process of learning how to inhabit spaces of tension, conflict, and ambiguity.

2.7   Becoming

Theoretical explication by itself cannot tell the story of how teachers both identify with and resist their teaching beings. It is for this reason that autobiographical narration has found me in my continued search for my ways of being and becoming a teacher, and my ways of knowing at the juncture between the personal and the pedagogical. My being-in-the-world through grief has both constrained and enabled the questions I have about what it means to exist in this familiarly strange place. Here, I turn once again to Heidegger (2010):

> Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to act upon them, or in each instance already grown up in them. Existence is decided only by each Dasein itself in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting such

possibilities. We come to terms with the question of existence always only

through existence itself. (Heidegger, 2010, p. 10)

When I think of *Dasein* as a place of possibility, I think of it as a place of becoming, a place for transformation. I agree with Kanu and Glor (2006, p. 107) that understanding oneself through the past and through narratives is a part of knowing oneself. The other part is to remove or detach oneself from existing patterns and belief systems for a fuller sense of responsibility for self and others (p. 108). I understand *Dasein* as a responsibility in pedagogical spaces. *Dasein*, in a way determines the ways in which I engage in the world and in my teaching practice it has meant the world of children whom I taught. I see it my responsibility to understand my *Dasein* to make meaning of the ways in which I taught and encountered my students.

As I became aware that my being in grief and its impact on myself, family, friends, students, and colleagues, I am trying to watch for other patterns of being that could be outcomes of my being in grief. I have been living in grief for as far back as I can remember. I have not known myself without the presence of grief. In the next few chapters I study what it has meant to be a teaching being in grief. I reflect on the ways my teaching journey unfolded, disrupted, gained momentum and then alienated me. I search for the everyday ways in which grief manifested in the classroom. It is my attempt to be with my grief in acceptance, understanding and compassion. Brian Brett (2009) captures this way of being beautifully: "Grief is complex and complexity can be dealt with only by learning it, understanding it and then gradually playing 'The Forgetting Waltz' less and less as time passes" (p. 30). The next chapter explores grief as it is lived and explores the scholarly literature on grief and its various constructs.

Chapter 3: Understanding Grief

3.1   A Complex World

Grief is an affect following ineffable and tangible loss. Attig (2001) writes that grieving is "involved, intricate, confused, complex, compound, the opposite of simple" (p. 33). When loss is intangible, individuals may not recognize their grief. Grief can be lived, even if the actual experience of grieving is not known, and therefore not understood. Attig (2001) goes on to explain that "as we grieve, we relearn a complex world" (p. 33). While grieving after losses, we often deal with many complex emotions such as shock, numbness, shame, guilt, fear and sometimes the feelings of being victimized. The finality of losses and the consequent grieving condition opens up a world for which we are mostly unprepared to deal with. In cases of terminally ill patients, even when loved ones know the outcome, they still have to deal with their loss when it happens. Life is usually never the same after significant losses.

In reflecting upon my own experiences, I wonder what do we know and learn when we live in ambiguous grief without recognizing this circumstance? Heidegger (1988) explains that "we meet with being's being in the understanding of being. It is understanding that…opens up or, as we say, discloses or reveals something like being" (p. 18). Until I could trace the origins of my being in grief, I could not develop a fulsome understanding of my being. The kind of grief that I explore in this thesis is various—intergenerational, postcolonial, personal, familial and cultural. The forms of grief I have experienced are intense, unresolved, complicated, prolonged, and disenfranchised. I discuss some of these as lived experiences through this study. I will use grief as described by other teachers, writers, poets and scholars in the ways that they have lived it experientially. Much like other emotions, grief is felt and lived and not understood theoretically by those experiencing it. I delve briefly into the study of grief and loss to provide a scholarly view of the emotion.

3.2   Grief Studies

The terms "grief" and "bereavement" are often used synonymously with no clear definition of what these words mean in different contexts (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 2000, p. 740; see also, Genevro et al., 2004). Nevertheless, researchers note that "grief" is an emotion, whereas "bereavement" is the condition out of which several emotions arise— namely sadness, despair, fear, and even anger (Attig, 1996; Genevro et al., 2004). The etymology of bereavement comes from "to be shorn off' or "torn up" (DeSpelder and Strickland, 1987, p. 206). It is the overwhelming and harsh state of being divested of something loved and to which one belonged. Bereavement influences us physically, emotionally, behaviorally, cognitively, interpersonally, and spiritually (Valle & Mohs, 2006). Grief is usually spoken and written about as if it is something to recover from almost giving it a pathological dimension. Or it is viewed as a transformative life event mostly as a catalyst for growth and change of the grieving individual and somehow a guide for others to follow (Anderson, 2010).

Ineffable grief is an unknown sense of loss, usually without an actual, tangible loss (Fagan, 2012). Claspell (1984) suggests that "because grief is a human phenomenon, it is important to study grief as it is lived" (p. 5). For Claspell, "actual loss is not necessary for someone to grieve" (1984, p. 9). Grief can be present without bereavement and mourning, as well as manifesting alongside these feelings. To look for projections of grief may be to look for symptoms such as tears, depression, denial and the sharing of stories of loss. Boss and Carnes (2012) observe that "mystery persists with ambiguous loss, sometimes forever and even across generations. People desperately search for meaning in the unrelenting confusion... when loss has no certainty, the search for meaning is excruciatingly long and painful" (p. 457). Seeking meaning through losses, integration of losses into lives as lived

and making peace with the pain of grief are some of the challenges that confront grieving people.

In the 1960s, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' (1969) book *On Death and Dying*, based on her work with terminally ill patients, brought the difficult processes of grief that people experience after the death of a loved one to public awareness. Developed as a model for grief work, it was a landmark in the understanding of grief as a psychological process. In her book, *On Grief and Grieving* (2004), she and her colleague David Kessler chart the territory of bereavement by looking at the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance not as linear, encapsulated processes but as individual experiences which may exist in spirals with the person returning to a previous stage again and again, but at different levels of expression (Kubler-Ross & Kessler, 2004).

My study honors grief as lived through intensely subjective experiences, highly individuated and complex. None of the studies mention grief in states of being. I mention these works to reiterate the importance of the recognition of grief in the world around us especially in wake of the extremely volatile and violent times we live in. One of the paradoxes of grief is that everyone processes it differently and therefore it is individual at the same time grief has a familial, social and cultural construct. Loss of lives in cultures and families is addressed differently sometimes through personal rituals and sometimes through cultural and religious ones. Darian (2014) says "The human grieving response is neither categorically simple, nor is it a predictable linear process" (p.195). Opening conversations about grief opens up a private world often found taken up and shared by others. Anderson (2010) says "Each family will have its own particular grief when loss occurs and that grief is shaped by its unique patterns of interaction and its particular history of loss" (p. 129). Families and culture are the contexts in which grief takes place, and how one moves through grieving spaces; bereavement is highly dependent upon familial attitudes, cultural beliefs,

practices, and attitudes toward death (Stroebe et al., 1992). Our existential belief systems seem challenged by experiences of grief, leading to fundamental questions about the meaning of life (Valle & Mohs, 2006). In facing significant losses, grieving people often need to come to an understanding of life after losses and ways in which to deal with themselves and others in their world. I have known grieving people often to turn to medication and other substances to help alleviate their suffering.

3.3   Grief in Families

Families carry loss histories and grief in known and unknown ways. Calling it intergenerational / multigenerational transmission legacies of trauma or the transfer of loss and trauma through family members, Danieli (1998) argues that what happens in one generation impacts other generations in multiple ways. Much of the ways we perceive ourselves and our identities comes from our families. In her study, Danieli (1998) has identified the prevalence of loss histories in families as not a new phenomenon even though the recognition and study of it happened only a few decades go. She says,

> Multigenerational transmission of trauma is an integral part of human history. Transmitted in word, writing, body language, and even in silence, it is as old as humankind. It has been thought of, alluded to, written about, and examined in both oral and written histories in all societies, cultures, and religions. (p.2)

There is grief in families and the culture of grieving in families too, which is different in each family. The culture of grief in families largely determines behavior patterns of family members. Families such as mine did not mourn when we lost people we loved. These were our patterns of survival. In our outward show of courage and bravery, we took ourselves to less than human spaces. We try to resist and appear the opposite of what we feel, to hide our inner lives. In the face of loss, failure, and hopelessness, we clung to what we could salvage -

our pride and dignity. As a legacy, I found that my family never short-changed their pride, dignity and values and never allowed pity expressed by others to claim them.

Another loss we experienced was that of compassion. We found little compassion for ourselves and became absent to the tender spaces in our being. In the presence of each other we were hardened and brittle. The family's culture of silence and hardness found its way in me. I found myself very resistant to the idea of being pitied. Deaths in the family came relentlessly in the years that I practiced as a teacher. I also found myself being very hard on myself in the years of grave personal tragedy, almost like I was considering it a punishment for myself. It was uncannily like life serving itself to me without compassion, tenderness and gentleness and I served the same to myself and others in my world.

3.4   Grief in Education

For me, there were no questions about grief for a long time, because of my comfort and familiarity with this way of being in the world. My familiarity with grief and all its attendant emotions kept me from understanding its existential source the way it exists in my being. I could not look beyond the thick veil of grief in the classroom. I do understand it as a way of being and acknowledge its presence in myself as a teacher and my world. Grief takes many forms other than death and tangible losses. Some of these are never recognized as causing grief and thus we live with some very deep and traumatic emotions unknowingly. And what does this mean for teachers who teach in grief and students who live their own grief? Why is education silent on matters of loss and grief and why is it failing to recognize grieving spaces of the educational community? Barron (2009) notes:

> We've also experienced grief leading to self-hatred, despair, and shame due to
> perceived professional failure and professional loneliness; grief regarding the
> intransigence of social injustice, our inability to learn from history, and our lack of
> hope for the future; grief over the realities of aging and the depressing material facts

of illnesses that diminish us or someone we care about. How could grief not be

present and accounted for in the full spectrum of emotion we say we want present

in our teaching-editing lives? (p. 28)

Grief in education is spoken sparingly mostly by women teachers. In that

educationally, it becomes a gendered space. My study honours the presence of grief as lived

in an educational institution and with a school community. My inquiry does not claim that

grief and bereavement will ultimately be a catalyst for growth and enhanced well-being,

thereby discounting the difficult and painful emotional processes of grief taking away the

real phenomenon of mourning involved, implying that grief experiences will somehow

account for something greater in the future. I tell the story of grief and how I am with it, the

way it is with me.

3.5   Grief as Lived

Grief can and does come to us not only from our own loss, but also from the loss

experienced by others to whom we are close. For Attig (2001), suffering arises when "we feel

helpless and powerless in the wake of forces and happenings we could not control. We feel deep

pain and anguish as we experience our losses as irretrievable and irredeemable and fear our

distress may never end" (p. 36). Grieving individuals find themselves fearful, insecure and

lacking confidence. Something vital to their lives has been taken away from them, with which

they identified, and to which they belonged: a person, home, family, culture, country,

community, work, future. Sometimes it can be one, more, or all of that coming together in a

single stroke of misfortune as in the case of my mother's family on the eve of India's

independence and partition in 1947. The resultant effect and crises are what grief encapsulates.

Bereavement is the condition in which most grieving people find themselves. Bereaved people

try to make sense of their losses through mourning by talking, expressing

their emotions, and engaging in ritualized ceremonies and other such social, cultural and spiritual forms and structures.

In India, among Hindu communities, mourning is a ritualized forty-day practice when family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances call on the bereaved family at their home and share their grief. Rituals and prayers for the departed are held finally culminating in a memorial service held at the temple. Although the forty-day mourning duration is now considerably shortened, some of the religious ceremonies are still adhered to. Social and cultural norms and attitudes to grief suggest an acknowledgement of loss and the integration of loss into the lives of those grieving in order to sustain the rhythm of life and living. The Hindu religion that we practice suggests the cyclic pattern of the human spirit (Atman) and gives the reassurance of the spirit talking life in another form. The common rhetoric of "time will heal all wounds" is heard by all those who grieve. This expression of consolation bears some truth, as time does soften the blow of loss, even if the healing process remains forever unfinished, especially in those instances when grief results in a change in identity, or an alteration in lifestyle.

For my mother's family, the overnight transition of becoming refugees meant a complete loss of all that to which they belonged and with which they identified. For me, the immediate passing of my husband meant the loss of a partner and all that we shared, a sense of security that a shared life provided. I felt the overwhelming fear of taking up the responsibilities associated with raising a young child and caring for an aging mother-in-law. I could anticipate the challenge of running the household on my teacher's salary and of completing all the unfinished business of my husband's work. Suddenly I was also looking at myself as a widow. I had no idea what that identity would entail. I had only one role model in widowhood and that was my mother-in-law, who had led the life of a recluse after her husband passed. I was staring at a life I didn't want to live. Life after loss was at a cost and I

had no idea, preparation or emotional ability to cope with it. I recognize now that it meant much more than all this.

As a grieving family after my husband's passing, we avoided talking of our grief to each other. Numbed with my own pain, I did not have any strength to see what my daughter, who was then six, was going through or what sense she made of her loss. We went about life in the months after mechanically, mostly putting up a brave front with each other. Social and cultural recognition of our grief was present and very obvious. Privately we hid what we felt, in the attempt to demonstrate our strength and resilience. And we each absorbed the other's unexpressed grief. Children who neither know nor understand grief, their own and others, tend to absorb the adults' affect in ways that they don't realize. Pedagogically the impact on children who have neither the mature understanding of loss and emotions nor meaning making from grieving and mourning, is far greater than explored educationally. While teaching, when I saw grieving children in the classroom, having lost a parent or a family member or having suffered parents' divorce, I found myself lacking in the skills to deal with their grieving condition, much as I found myself lacking in my own. Words of comfort and consolation, I knew from my own experience do little except show up emptily.

Because I was hiding my grief from others, I felt the acknowledgement of their grief might embarrass or cause them to feel more of their grief. I resorted to silence usually and to time taking its own course. The fall out of that might be compassion. Experiences of children dealing with grief has been an unchartered domain in education and neither have we looked at appropriately sensitive ways to deal with grieving members of the educational community. When education falls silent on issues, its impact is deeper simply because of a big part of what constitutes most people's formative experience remains unacknowledged. The awkwardness around difficult emotions is palpable in its daily presence.

The field of education has remained absent to deeper, volatile and difficult emotions, owing to the difficulty of finding time, space, and of expending the effort necessary to be present for those experiencing loss. Hurst (2009) affirms," I reflect upon how we carry our loss histories with us into the classroom: this loss could be death, but it is more multifarious than that. This is loss in its broadest sense" (p. 31). Grief needs to be supported in its existence, or else it persists hauntingly, becoming harmful in different ways, impacting self and others.

3.6   Mourning

I recognize that an important aspect of grief and the integration of losses into our lives is the process of mourning. I understand it as a 'humanizing' process after the overwhelming feeling of something being taken from us. It is a process of slowly making meaning and peace with loss after the numbness and shock arising from loss events. I do not subscribe to any formal or ritualized duration of mourning as it depends on individual circumstances. I do however feel that mourning is the process in which the world offers itself to us in comfort, conversations, support and engaged presence. I have come to understand mourning as a space of both thinking and feeling, because of the way grief is integrated consciously in lived experience. Grief engages, deeply moving emotions, vulnerability, and mourning pushes us to articulate all that one confronts emotionally while in grief. Mourning opens a space of acknowledgement and presence for grief, both to ourselves and to others. It opens up our vulnerability to ourselves and the world.

Bowering (2009) explains that mourning explains that mourning "derives from the Old English *murnan,* which is from the Sanskrit term for both memory and anxiety, an interesting doubleness" (p. 12). For me, the coming together of the memory of loss with the articulation of the anxiety that such memory produces, unite beautifully as mourning and explains the resistance to both in the case of my family. Mourning can take the form of

conversations, tears, wailing, and as writing, art, poetry, music and other non-verbal forms of expression. We mourn even in silence, and this can often be an isolating and challenging experience. Grief seeks expression and when it doesn't find it, it gets repressed and that has some damaging consequences. Bowering (2009) suggests that "despite the given procedures, mourning is not easy. The heart does break" (p. 12). One of the most challenging parts of mourning is accepting our vulnerability and of those around us.

Following loss, there is residual shame and guilt in the grieving families left behind, and the friends and relatives who wish to offer solace must do so with the realization that words and actions can bring fleeting comfort at best. For my family, to mourn meant a failure of all the survivor mechanisms and strategies that they had developed. A reminder of the loss could not be made visible verbally or affectively as that made them feel more vulnerable and thus perceived as weaker by themselves and others, a risk they could no longer take. They could not afford to break again even despite the weight of grief they carried. A consequence of the lack of visible, shared mourning meant the loss of vital human space. Goto (2009) writes on losing her grandmother and father, "I don't know when the mourning began ("the mourning" sounds so contained... as if it has distinct edges)" (p. 188). Mourning seems inevitable for the bereaved as a part of the grieving process. To sidestep mourning means an attempt to shortcut the grieving process and a numbing of pain and trauma. I found myself doing the same when personal tragedy struck with the deaths of my husband, father and brother within a space of several years.

One of the reasons for extreme exhaustion among people in grief is their inability to express their grief in a way that protects themselves and others. They are constantly moving like masses of pain and suffering, closing themselves off from the grieving process, without fully embodying what they experience. An active grieving process involves mourning for loss: in India, such mourning is public, ritualized, undertaken with the support of the

community. Mourning is the process of incorporating the loss into our ongoing life-worlds

(DeSpelder & Strickland, 1987, p. 207). Mourning necessitates rebuilding a new self-within a

different life-world. This process focuses less on the personal reactions of someone to loss,

directing greater attention, instead, to the forms of readjustment that people develop in

navigating the social arena. Indeed, we might say that mourning is the most public expression

of loss. Mourning takes the form of conversations, stories of loss, art, music, poetry as

expressions of grief, meaning making, and integrating oneself into the world after loss. Hurst

(2009) writes of her own mourning process:

> Although I cannot let go of these stories, it is in the silence that follows when I feel
>
> most the genuine possibilities for engagement, transformation, and connection. These
>
> are stories that are longing and hurting to be told and held as much as they can be,
>
> and as teachers we are often faced with stories like these. (p. 32)

I have witnessed grieving children in the classroom impacted by death of close family

members, divorce of their parents, financial losses and the like. I have found myself mostly

silent and awkward in these circumstances and I also did not wish to cause embarrassment

to children who tried hard to cover their grief with normalcy. In that I am an accomplice in

the denial.

Grief came relentlessly to me after the first few deaths in my family, and I was almost

ashamed to be seen grieving endlessly, and to have people console me with the same words

and thoughts uttered over and over. Moure (2009) observes that "the steps of grief were

utterly foreign to me. That there could be steps to this. Like falling onto the knife again and

again and again" (p. 251). Living in loss meant living in constant shame, guilt, and fear.

While scholars in diverse fields such as psychology, sociology, thanatology, psychoanalysis,

psychotherapy have written about death, however forms of grief and trauma stemming from

the loss of home, community, belonging, culture, future, stability and security have received

comparatively little attention from researchers. As a third-generation woman and educator impacted by grief and loss, I want to address this gap in the scholarly literature, by understanding how being in grief, living with loss, manifests pedagogically in the classroom and impacts interactions between teachers and the school community.

3.7   Personal Grief

Grief manifested tangibly as tragic loss when I was thirty-two years old, when my husband of nine years and friend of eleven years passed away. Since then, and in eleven more years I lost both my father and my younger brother, and have remained in the ever-tightening grip of intensified, complicated, and delayed grief. Grief has kept me in various stages of shock, numbness, anger, yearning, despair, and suffering. After many years, I discovered the reason. For Kubler Ross (2014), our grief is as individual as our lives. I do not think that I have shown any symptoms of grief outwardly and deliberately, although it has manifested in almost all dimensions of my life. All three deaths were unanticipated, and all had the same cause: sudden cardiac arrest. Except for my brother, who collapsed on the bathroom floor at home and died instantly, my husband and father passed away in hospital, even as they seemed to be responding to treatment for some other ailments. It was almost as if death crept up from an unexpected slope and took over in a matter of mere seconds. In an uncanny twist of events, both my father and husband died in their sleep in the early hours of the morning in the same hospital.

Loss impacted the way I lived and shaped how others perceived me. As the hands of grief tightened, I went deeper into numbness and isolation. In my husband's passing I was facing grief one on one. I was seeing its face, smelling its fragrance, hearing its voice, touching it and feeling its presence all around me. It was so overpoweringly, so coldly present, so tangible that it froze me inwardly for years. In the years following my husband's death I shut myself in, and mechanically went about completing his work, looking after my

six-year-old daughter while at the same time sorting out legal formalities concerning property and financial details, in the absence of a will.

Kubler Ross's (1969) first stage of grief is denial and isolation. Perhaps I was in survival mode, but perhaps, also, such were the contingencies of the time that there was no time to mourn him. I did not mourn him. I was angry that he had gone suddenly, abruptly. I felt abandoned and alone. I tried not to show my grief. I remember is feeling very exhausted and burdened by responsibilities and the new identity of widowhood and also by my constant effort to camouflage my greif. My father went next after a few years. He had a few health complications but he was managing them well. I did not mourn him either. The night before he passed, we joked and laughed about the way he had looked after me as an infant while my mother worked, and I teased him saying I was paying it all back by helping to change his position with all the tubes running around his body, feeding him and looking after him now. He was gone the next morning. My mother's grief ripped me apart more. Perhaps I grieved my mother's grief. I could not bear to go to my parent's home for a long time afterwards. Again, all I remember is trying to sort out the legal and financial logistics for my mother. I avoided feeling my grief, but it was there nonetheless, like an ominous shadow. I avoided the grief that existed in my being. I did not realize that I was in the grip of prolonged, protracted, complicated and almost pathological grief. I am choosing not to go into the definitions of all these terms that I identify my grief with, instead to explicate it through my thesis as lived experiences. and of the ways grief manifested in my personal life, and my professional life as a teacher.

What happens when something comes calling repeatedly? Grief called on me persistently. Because it called me, was it my calling? Leggo (2011) writes that "my sense of who I am in the world is an effect of language, a sense of presence, a representation, seemingly whole but always fragmentary" (p. 48). The language grief was using to call me

and make itself present was an intensely personal one, claiming others and consuming me as it appeared. The most recent to go was my brother, younger by two years. I was not in the country at the time and my avoidance this time was physical, also unintentional. I could not participate in the funeral rites and maybe that is why I find no closure to his death even today. I often find myself referring to him in the present tense. With his passing, I came to understand and realize the responsibility of grief. It was a question that addressed me constantly and slowly I came to bear responsibility for it. It was in the ways I responded when grief came calling and in the way, I responded to others while grieving that I inquire into in this thesis. I responded at the time in numbness and shock being overwhelmed with repeated losses. To deal with life with losses, one of my ways was to want life as before losses.

Others who have experienced overwhelming grief report doing mundane things like ordering pizza (Thomas, 2017); spending time in the kitchen, cleaning up, and reading emails (Baird; as quoted in Bowering, 2009, p. 2-3); writing (Bush, 2009, p.39) eating (McNutt, 2009). Dealing with the mundane gives people in grief a way of sustaining themselves amid psychological and emotional chaos. For me it was work that gave some continuity and reassurance of life as death of family members was taking its toll. Putting myself into my work was at the time also a sort of avoidance of my own emotions and those of my family's. My mother's grief in particular distressed me. Witnessing my mother's grief, I did not attend to my own. Brett (2009) reminds us that "death is not about the dead. It is about the living. Our grief and our inability to speak it" (p. 22). The overwhelming thought that took over with my younger brother's passing was that now there were no males left in the family, and that my mother now had only one child left: me. This thought almost choked me. I felt my body and spirit weighed beyond their own weight in grief. My exhaustion and depletion of the time as I confronted grief yet again was more than anything I can write in words. I did not

question my grief and perhaps because of my numbness and silence, the question itself has come looking for me. In a letter written to a grieving friend in 1917, Sigmund Freud offers the following words of consolation:

> We find a place for what we lose. Although we know that after such a loss the acute stage of mourning will subside; we also know that a part of us shall remain inconsolable and never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it is completely filled, it will nevertheless remain something changed forever. (Freud, 1961, p. 386)

More than me finding a place for grief, it found a home within me. Grief chose us repeatedly. Another dimension of grief is that your own grief opens a similar feeling in someone else. I have noticed this whenever I have talked about my grief, others have taken up the call, summoning their own grief into attendance. Grief is almost magnetic in that way of drawing in from others and making conversation a shared space. The question of how my grief and my stories meet the world has been a thinking space. The question of grief is such that it opens the world to it. The world meets it as its own. Often my conversations about grief bring about a certain tenderness and vulnerability of the other and their grieving spaces. It becomes 'our grief'—a shared, compassionate space. Our grief is how I like to look at this study. It is mine and yet it is not just mine alone.

I am hopeful about the complicated conversations this inquiry might open and sustain. This inquiry comes out the grief I have felt and lived out of my life. It is my seeking. Heidegger (2010) argues that "every questioning is a seeking. Every seeking takes its direction from what is sought" (p. 3). I seek the opening as a readiness to speak, to listen to and question the ways in which my teaching practice has evolved. If the question comes Why? Or why now? I think back to the singer and poet Leonard Cohen's (2006) words: *I can*

hold in a great deal, I don't speak/Until the waters overflow their banks/And break

through the dam (p. 101)

3.8   Who Teaches?

Teaching myself to teach and being supported by the school community in learning
how to both learn and to unlearn teaching, situating myself within pedagogical encounters of
one kind or another, being in grief and experiencing moments of deep uncertainty have
brought me closer to the revelatory significance of my being in the world. The thesis
negotiates spaces of my being to which I have long been in a way absent for long. With study
and reflection, it has brought me to a deeper understanding of who I am, where I have come
from and how that implicated me in practice and pedagogy. I situate my claim to being a
teacher upon a foundation of everyday practice and pedagogical encounters that have
sometimes contrasted with, and at other times, complemented my being in the world. The
necessity of knowing myself as a teacher came from the unthinking and unfeeling spaces that
became looming large in the later years of my practice. The negotiation of teacher being in
the world draws me into a process of learning how to inhabit spaces of tension, fear, conflict,
and ambiguity. Fear of my own vulnerability and of others was a big part of the way I felt as
a teacher.

Palmer (1998, p. 36) acknowledges that "as a teacher, I am at my worst when fear takes
the lead in me, whether that means teaching in fear of my students or manipulating their fears of
me" (p. 36). I was fearful as a teacher. Fear is an accomplice of grief and seems particularly
overwhelming most times. Fear makes its presence in our beings through all that we have
experienced pedagogically, and culturally. Fear, loss, and grief sustain and supported each other
within me. The sense of identification with fear and grief was such that without it I risked losing
myself still more. I had shut out vulnerability. I had a hardness about me and I felt estranged from
the pedagogical practices I saw around me in the work of my colleagues.

The students' otherness frightens me. I was afraid to admit our differences and I was afraid of encountering them. I risked losing my sense of self via such encounters. I was afraid of coming into presence. My immersion and absorption in grief was such that I could see and understand it. In the world of children, I find myself lacking warmth and humanity as I had shut off a range of vulnerable emotions and that impacted me and others adversely. The consequent loneliness and isolation felt like a wall around me.

In my everyday experiences of teaching, grief manifested within me while remaining hidden from the outside world, inaccessible to the eyes and ears of my students, colleagues, and others in my life. The awkwardness in academia to deal with deeper and prolonged emotions such as loss and grief is palpable. My questions are: What happens when a teacher is in grief? Is it possible to separate and therefore silence personal emotions in a six or eight-hour workday and then somehow connect to these feelings afterwards? Or is it possible to integrate and embrace private emotions of teachers, and to make them seem more human in the workplace? Hargreaves (1998) locates emotional experience "at the heart of teaching" (p. 835). Emotions are at the heart of living, working, teaching, pedagogy and practice. It is a human way of being. We dehumanize when we fail to acknowledge our own humanity and that of other people. Emotions in schools are a natural part of a teacher's life yet, as Hargreaves (1998) notes, "emotions are virtually absent from the advocacy of and the mainstream literature specifically concerned with educational change and reform" (p. 837). My struggle to acknowledge myself as a woman in grief and as a female educator have been absences as I repressed my emotions both privately and publicly. Grief was such a vulnerable space I hardened myself to make it easier to live with it. I denied myself the humanity to grieve, mourn and feel my grief. I tried to shield others from my grief and denied myself and them ways to be humanly with me. My womanhood became another vulnerability that I concealed in practice with the paternalistic pedagogy of fear, distance, control and discipline.

Teachers' personal lives effect who they are and how they teach. I found it unnatural and dehumanizing to be silent and awkward about what I was going through in my life at the time I was teaching. And I found it harder to do anything about it. I seek the silences and ineffable grounds of both grief and pedagogy to explore how a teacher can understand her work when her personal lifeworld seems threatening and overwhelming.

I turn to van Manen's (1994) conceptualization of pedagogy, as well as the work of scholars who have explored their own worlds of grief. I interlace these once again with Biesta's (1999) idea of coming into presence educationally and humanly. This autobiographical study seeks to understand the experience of grief while teaching and how lives of teachers, more generally, impact their work in the classroom in order to explore the question of whether it is at all possible to keep the personal and the professional apart. Personal life and history have impacted my practice in ways that I have not fully known or understood. Citing the work of Freud, Britzman (2013) explains that

> we only remember unsuccessful history, that if history is resolved events no
>
> longer need be repeated or return like the repressed and can be placed into the past
>
> and thereby post a difference between then and now. (Britzman, 2013, p. 106)

I locate my being-in-the-world through grief arising from loss, having experienced both their tangible and intangible forms. Tangible grief came into my life after the passing on of four family members in quick succession, while intangible grief was a longstanding presence because of the intertwining of familial loss with intergenerational grief (Pomeroy & Garcia, 2011). Pedagogy seeks a return to one's pedagogical memories as the fabric of learning (Britzman, 2013). It is from pedagogy I come, and it is to pedagogy I go. Teaching is my space of transformation, transference, uncertainty, ambiguity, dilemma and sustenance. In the narrative accounts that follow, I reach into the layers of complexities within my personal and professional life and explore the separation.

My grief was not embodied even when I felt it outside of me. My body knew discipline and control from my childhood experiences. The lack of expression though the body and its discipline is what Parker (2009, p. 72) describes of her own experience, describing how she internalized the message that the body is not an entity that belongs in the classroom. She writes that as early as grade school, her body was disciplined through things as when to use the bathroom, when to be silent, when to speak quietly, and when to feed herself. In my own case, I did not know how to acknowledge my grief corporeally with others. I had always felt like a "disembodied entity" (Parker, 2009, p. 73). Our bodies were disciplined through the regimentation of postcolonial boarding school environments. We learned to control our bodies to the extent that the body ceased to feel, and to show only what made others comfortable. Embodied grief manifested in tears, but visible signs of sadness and melancholia disturbed sociocultural norms, and we were therefore dissuaded from outright expression of these emotions.

As a teacher dealing with my own grief, I could see grief in some students, and occasionally heard from colleagues about their own experiences of loss. Other than words of sympathy, I saw little else to support those grieving. I wonder now what we can do in educational institutions when we know and see grief? How can we embrace grief in way that does not cause embarrassment and more losses? I know from my own lived experiences of losses and grief that both silences and sympathetic words don't work and they may actually sometimes be counterproductive. Presence matters. I understand presence as a thoughtfully engaged way of being with ourselves and others. It requires a sustained interaction and a certain mindfulness in encountering and responding to ourselves and others. Presence is both in being and becoming. In advocating for the thoughtfulness of what we do pedagogically, we cannot forget being thoughtful about ourselves (van Manen, 2015). Fundamentally, as teachers, we bring to the classrooms, and, by extension, to our students, who we are: our

histories, cultures, experiences, thoughts, feelings, worldviews, and beliefs. In our interactions with students, fellow teachers, and parents, we have possibilities for transformation within our reach. For me, it was my being in grief that impacted my being with the children I taught. Grief became my dwelling place, both in terms of my being, and in how I presented myself in school as a teacher, and professional. In the next chapter I dig deeper into the origin of my grief through my family history and I explore the ways in which children of grieving families receive grief pedagogically from the adults. I also situate my grieving self in the classroom on the first day of my practice.

Chapter 4: Understanding Intergenerational Grief and Pedagogy

This chapter identifies my being in the world through intergenerational grief and explores the ways in which grief manifested for me as a new teacher at a high school in northern India. Through a series of narratives, I depict my being and becoming pedagogically. The intergenerational transmission of grief and trauma from the generation which has experienced Partition provides the larger historical, social, cultural, and experiential framework in what follows. Scholars have theorized the passing on of trauma in families using concepts such as "multigenerational trauma," (Danieli, 1998), "soul wound" and "historical trauma" (Duran et al., 1998), and "transgenerational trauma" (Davidson, 1980) in their studies of victims and families in varying contexts, political situations and traumatic events. I will use the term intergenerational grief to characterize the manner in which my family's grief was passed on to me.

My mother and her family passed on their grief to me. They experienced the partition of India into two separate countries, India and Pakistan on the eve of independence from colonial rule in 1947. They were never to go back, such was the finality of that night. They carried the weight of their losses in their halting stories, haunting silences, pained sighs and hidden tears. In this chapter I try to make sense of the loss and grief, which have constantly surrounded me through family members. My earliest memories as a child have been of weight, a burden I felt I was carrying.

4.1   Being in Intergenerational Grief

Although my earliest and most persistent memories are of my mother's grief, which she unknowingly transferred to me, I recognize implicitly that she herself was the recipient of her parents' grief and trauma because of their first-hand experiences of partition in 1947. In August 1947, the colonists handed India its independence but not before partitioning the country into India and Pakistan. A portion of the provinces of Punjab (in the north and north-

west) and Bengal (in the east) became Pakistan. About twelve million people were impacted by the decision which had far reaching consequences in terms of losses and violence. Nair (2011) says,

> It is difficult to study the violence that shook the Punjab in 1947. Film, family histories, literature, and popular understandings of the event clothe it with an enormous power that could not be spoken of for so many decades because it was so profoundly hurtful and of such lasting consequences. (p. 188)

The creation of independent India at this juncture, made the chaos of partition seem somehow less important than the freedom celebration in the country and nation building rhetoric. The fact that two provinces were impacted in a large, diverse country and most of the Indian leadership at the time were complicit with the colonial decision for partition, made for more silences politically. Butalia (2000), whose family was a victim of Partition writes, "Never before or since, in human history, has there been such a mass exodus of people, and in so short a time. Just the mere scale was phenomenal. Twelve million people crossed the border in both directions" (p. 60). My mother's family lost all they had, and all they had belonged to for generations. The fragrance of the soil of their homeland never left their bodies and souls. Loss haunts their being and mine. Their yearning and longing became mine. Most people do not realize their grief at all and much less the ways in which they pass it on to others in their world. Grief formed an integral part of my mother's family's being having lost all that they belonged to in one night. They were unable to belong in that way to anything but their grief. Grief was the thread that family members shared; they passed it on to their children in the form of half-told stories, filled with nostalgia for a time past. They carried the burden of loss in their beings. They never spoke of, nor did they recover from their loss. I heard only halting, co-created stories in the still, dark nights, told by the witnesses of those horrific days and nights of violence, bloodshed, communal strife and

uprooting in 1947.Their suffering existed as a present absence in their very beings. They

never mourned outwardly and carried their loss and grief in their being. I narrate here a story

that I heard co-created by my mother and her mother on a dark summer night.

4.2   *The Doll*

The doll she had left behind bore silent testimony to my mother's disrupted childhood in a city that was not even a hundred miles away, but was now in another country. Blue eyes, long blond hair, thick blond lashes, plastic, in ballerina slippers and a floral skirt. My mother cannot remember the colours. She thinks the doll might have been a present, but she does not clearly remember how she got it. Together with her younger sister, she would hide in their mother's dressing room and play with her powder and kohl (eye liner made at home) to use on the doll, and fashioning themselves after their mother and her friends. She thinks of her doll propped up on cushions on the floor in their room, where they usually set up a mock home scene each afternoon, while the adults had their siesta. She often wonders now if someone eventually claimed her doll.

My mother's family lived in a large house dressed in kinkhab (brocade) upholstery, oblong cushions dotting the seating areas, large Victorian frames, ornate mirrors on the walls, and large windows covered with velvet drapes. My mother and her sisters shared a bright upstairs room but often slept together with their baby brother on their mother's large bed in her room downstairs. My mother remembers being chased by the household's domestic staff to drink milk and eat almonds in the morning, and she would often hide behind the floor-length drapes to avoid them. This is a memory that often makes my mother smile through pained sighs. The fragrance of marinated meat, herbs, spices, a smoked oven, and the sweetness of flavored milk clung to the high ceilings, white walls, oak wood floors and pillars of their home. Although my mother was just six years old at the time, the memory of her own mother's swishing silk saree and pearl necklace hangs delicately in the corner of her eyes.

My mother, her mother, and her siblings, are all part of a generation that lived through partition. They told stories of loss, of home, of old familiar by-lanes and cobblestones, of comforts, of belonging, of the prosperity they had known and would never know again. They told their deeply felt stories while lying on cool white cotton sheets, during mid-summer nights, with the constellations spread out in the night sky, the banyan tree with its old arms, thick leaves, and untidy beard casting its sheltered shadows on the open back courtyard. This tree pushed its roots in through the discolored, decayed, weakened wall of her parent's dislocated home. Their longing for home burned in their eyes like embers, and they often fell asleep with words still clinging to their lips, leaving much unspoken and unheard. Their silences haunted more.

The doll became a haunting metaphor of longing and yearning for what my mother

lost that night as a child. When the adults in our lives told us children their stories, they

relived some of their nostalgia and pain, always careful that they only spoke of what was still

beautiful and tender in their memories, lest the children get wind of their grief. For them, partition was an event beyond their control, something they suffered and survived, yet having survived, they may have convinced themselves that they could transcend their loss and grief.

Heidegger (2010) explains that "Beings can show themselves from themselves in various ways, depending on the mode of access to them (p. 27). I did not understand that pain then as I do now when I encountered deaths of several close family members first hand. I become present to their pain as I reconstruct stories of her father to my daughter, who had turned six the year her father died. I tread carefully myself, speaking only with fondness of his humour and courage, but not going anywhere near the pain of the years of his illness, or the trauma of his passing. For Dreyfus (1991), "cultures as well as human beings exist; their practices contain an interpretation of what it means to be a culture" (p. 15). As human beings, we created a culture to avoid our pain and suffering by failing to acknowledge our loss and grieving adequately. Sometimes the denial of reality creates a stronger presence. Grief haunts our beings sometimes in unknown ways. The grief experienced by mother's family, and that of twelve million other people affected by partition, close upon the celebration of Independence from the British colonialists, became inaudible, drowned out by the rhetoric of nation-building.

Butalia (2000) explains that for her, "looking back on it now, there are times when the whole business seems absurd. Partitioning two lives is difficult enough. Partitioning millions is madness" (p. 63). In creating a Muslim-majority Pakistan and a Hindu-majority India, a most painful birth of two countries was witnessed, the scars of which have still not healed though most first-hand witnesses are now either gone or are in their fading years. Grief of this division and its ensuing losses might live on in succeeding generations, like mine, although not everybody is aware of it. The loss and grief of those who suffered the

pain of losing everything except their own lives and witnessing the brutality of others losing

theirs finds little or no mention except in art, music, poetry, fiction and films. I read about

partition in my school history book, which described in just one paragraph what people like

myself still suffer seventy years on. "It is only recently that the social and oral history of

partition has been pursued with vigor. For more than forty years, fiction provided the most

accessible accounts of the vendetta fought out across the plains of Punjab" (Sidhwa et al.,

2000, p. 232). I read about partition again much later in fiction, and when I watched films on

the theme when I attended college. That is when I fully realized the suffering in the stories of

my mother's family.

Butalia (2000) explains how dehumanizing the experience of Partition was: "in most

historical accounts of Partition, people are just numbers, or else they are that terrible word,

'informants', mere sources of information." (p. 74). For the purposes of this thesis I will not

delve into any atrocities, brutalities, violence or other experiences related to what survivors

witnessed. I attend to only what accompanies the grief of the affected people and how that

sustains and permeates others for generations afterwards. I confirm what Butalia (2000)

mentions: putting people in the centre of my study instead of grand politics (p. 77). By

making people central to the idea of multigenerational grief, we acknowledge them and

their suffering of grief and give voice to it.

The grief of so many people stands disenfranchised and all but erased from public

discourse, school curricula and now, with the passing of the first generation of those witnesses,

also from humanity. Doka (1999) situates disenfranchised grief as "experienced by those who

incur a loss that is not, or cannot be, openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially

supported" (p. 37). He goes on to say that such grief is paradoxical; its very nature exacerbates

grief. The one pervasively known way for grief to be integrated into the grievers' lives is to

acknowledge, recognize, support and help them embrace their losses. This is also a part of a

healthy mourning and in most cultures a ritualized process especially with the loss of a life. Grief that goes unacknowledged and unembraced produces more grief and sometimes an increased sense of loss to the grievers.

The rhetoric and euphoria of independent India silenced the lived histories, experiences and stories of people who lost their homes and identities even as they won back their country from the colonists, becoming pawns in a political game between the leaders of Britain and India. Connections between this trauma and people's daily lives were either deliberately ignored, or selectively acknowledged through the media, and through creative forms of representation such as film. This denial has meant that people affected by loss and grief also lost their right to be represented appropriately and with dignity in school curricula and intellectual discourse. I know from the grief of my family that our silences became deafening and almost choked us. Butalia (2000) speaks of this grief as she heard it in family stories of her family—the longing for what was once theirs but now in another county; and the fact that it could never be a "closed chapter of history—that its simple, brutal political geography infused and divided us still" (p. 5). Silences about losses that came out of this political division of the country find neither closure nor voices to speak their grief. Such is the stillness around it.

For my mother's family, the lack of acknowledgement of their grief was dehumanizing because it deprived them of their identity and personhood. My mother's family had left all that was familiar to them; they had to survive their loss and create new identities. Grief not only inhabited them, it also defined them; it caused ruptures (Danieli, 2010) in their lives and a vulnerability in their being to which they responded with resistance and hardness. Hadjiyanni (2002) observes that "through their dislocation, refugees lose many facets of what once constituted their identity, their way of life, status, wealth, power, places, people and in some

cases language and culture" (p. 1). In suffering loss, and experiencing crises of identity, my mother's family had to face the challenge of rebuilding their lives and taking care of their families. This in a way afforded them little time and energy to mourn their losses. Pandey (2001) says, "And yet, while individuals and families recreate themselves in changed conditions, sometimes by forgetting, they—and the communities and nations in which they live– are not able to set aside the memory of the violence quite so easily" (p. 16). An important aspect of grief is the culture it creates within the family. Families such as mine did not mourn outwardly for their losses. In our outward show of courage and bravery, we took ourselves to less than human spaces. We tried to resist and appeared the opposite of what we felt, to hide what we were going through inwardly. In the face of losses and hopelessness, we clung to what we could salvage—our pride and dignity. As a legacy, I found that my family never short-changed their pride, dignity and values and never allowed pity expressed by others to claim them. Another loss we experienced was that of compassion. We found little compassion for ourselves and became absent to the tender spaces in our being. In presence of each other we were hardened and brittle. Sympathy and condolences which are socialized norms of grieving became a place of great awkwardness and perceived weakness for me. I found myself very resistant to the idea of being pitied. Deaths in the family came relentlessly in the years that I practiced as a teacher. I also found myself being very hard on myself in the years of grave personal tragedy. I found myself serving others in my world the same lack of sensitivity and compassion.

4.3   Who Are We?

My memories of the stories my mother and her family have shared connect me to a daunting question: *Who are we*? I find something of us is constantly being revealed in the presence of others. Like bell hooks (2009), I have often found myself speechless, in a certain sense, bereft of "an adequate language to name all that had shaped and formed me" (p. 17).

In finding meaning and identity in my life as a student, teacher, and now graduate student, I am still not sure if I am only looking for myself, or if I am looking *at* and *for* myself simultaneously, *at* and *for* the adults whose lived experiences of Partition haunted my childhood. Until very recently, I have been absent to my being and to my becoming as a postcolonial citizen and educator. The work of reclaiming individual, collective, national, and communal identities lies, at present, in scrutinizing "our sense of symbolic citizenship, or myths of belonging, by identifying ourselves with the 'starting points' of other national and international histories and geographies (Bhabha, 2012, p. xx). For Danieli (2010), the search for who we are also involves a strongly affective dimension beyond the structural features mapped in Bhabha's postcolonial elaboration:

> An individual's identity involves a complex interplay of multiple spheres or systems. Among these are the biological and intrapsychic; the interpersonal-familial, social, and communal; the ethnic, cultural, ethical, religious, spiritual, and natural; the educational/professional/occupational; the material/economic, legal, environmental, political, national, and international... These systems dynamically coexist along the time dimension to create a continuous conception of life from past through present to the future. (Danieli, 2010, p. 7)

Stories and narratives of lived experience keep our identities alive, when our ways of being in the world are not acknowledged and honoured within larger political, social, cultural and educational contexts. The absence of critical thought and public discourse on the way the history of a country has shaped collective and individual consciousness, ways of being, and the burden of loss, grief, and disruption carried by successive generations has either been deliberately avoided or neglected. It is through unravelling my family history, postcolonial background, schooling experiences, and the associated pleasures, traumas, and sense of loss that I can understand what it means to be living in postcolonial India as a third-generation

woman affected by partition and postcoloniality, a teacher, and now a graduate student in a Canadian university.

Within the intersections of the complex layers of who we are, silence greets our attempts at understanding our being in the world. I seek my being through a multitude of dimensions that constitute who I am as a person, and who I am as a teacher. The adults in my world were either children themselves, or young adults during the waning years of British rule. Since most of these people were from North India, they had witnessed the trauma of Partition, and had experienced first-hand the scars and fractures of a traumatized postcolonial landscape. There are, in other words, many layers of historical and political complexity in my own coming into presence as a student and educator, and teasing apart these layers requires me to work through how my parents, their friends and colleagues, and others of their generation rebuilt their lives, identities, and pedagogies during a period of great political, social, and emotional upheaval.

Olsen (2008) suggests that "the present always links to the past, because each of us remains in part bound by our previous assemblage of a self while we reconstruct ourselves within any present experience" (p. 14). The past never really passes but in fact remains indelibly embedded in our present and it requires careful examination to understand how it persists. The idea to understand the past and the ways in which it continues to influence us is an important and necessary connection educationally. I embrace the journey into the past as it unfolds in the pages of this thesis, and understand that making connections to the present holds the promise of helping me comprehend who I am today. Stories have been a formative pedagogical influence on me since childhood, and it is through story-telling that my thesis emerges, unfolds, asks, and searches for answers. Stories came from the first pedagogues I knew in my home, including family members, friends of my parents, and other adults within my family's orbit. There is a sense in which the actual stories I share simultaneously conceal and reveal the core of my

inquiry. My concern is not primarily with the outward form of my narratives, whether extended

or brief, but rather with how my own being has been shaped and

formed as a boarding school student, through my life as a teacher, and how each of these

dimensions of my being-in-the-world have unfolded in response to the passing on of

intergenerational trauma, grief, and loss.

Honoring the experiential levels which are central to my inquiry, I do not seek

smooth transitions between different memories and moments in my life, nor do I find it either

helpful or necessary to try and capture every detail of these experiences. Indeed, much of

what I remember is inflected by loss, grief, and pain, and casting my mind over these

experiences for this thesis has been a difficult process. It may very well be that certain

experiential details are forgotten in the passage of time, but it is also true that certain

experiences are painful, fraught, and laden with meaning, and cannot therefore be recalled in

full. At the same time, there are certain memories we do, in fact, recall, but which we do not

wish to recount. This thesis constitutes my attempt to make absences present, to dig through

the layers of concealment, to seek out the hiding places. Continuing the work of

understanding my pedagogical fullness of being, I turn now to a narrative of my being and

becoming a teacher of my first day as a teacher at Soorya High and show the ways in which I

was both absent to myself and others as the wall of multigenerational grief came between me

and my own humanity.

4.4   *Grief Manifests*

I teach English to students of grade five, four different sections, about 120 students a day. These ten and eleven year olds are new to me as much as I am new to them. I have joined in the middle of the school year. I am unable to comprehend this very human space of children with their wondering, waiting and wanting. They make demands of me that I cannot understand. My body feels more tense in their presence. I am afraid but I do not show it. I cannot tell if I am afraid of encountering them or myself through them. I hide behind a text book sometimes and most times I am unable to make eye contact with them. I deliver instruction and the curriculum in the way I know it best; out of the book, by the book and nothing but the book. It is my place of refuge and solace. A young, nervous, bespectacled boy stands up to tell me he has forgotten his book at home. My face turns red, my eyes narrow

and wrinkle and my tone becomes angry as I ask him why. I know it's a useless question but I ask it anyway because I have nothing else to say. The boy cowers and stays silent. With my lips pursed I ask him to leave the class and I tell him he has no business being in place he has no respect for. I take his carelessness so personally and I lose the inability to regain my composure for the rest of the duration of the class. I can sense the other students breathe uneasily and feeling almost grateful it isn't them my ire is directed at. I feel I have given a lesson to all of them with the action I have taken. A sense of good purpose overcomes me. The students by the next class know my anger and try hard not to annoy me. A distance is maintained and I am comfortable in it. It is familiar. I think this way I can avoid dealing with humans, I deal with work, and I feel comfortable. They exhaust me.

This is how grief manifests for me in the classroom. The pedagogy of grief surfaces in my being in these moments. Lewis, (1961), speaking of his own grief, describes how "there is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me" (p. 5). I cannot see what is before me. I am absent to my own humanity, and to those of others. I also do not like to be seen. The cloak of grief also becomes my armor. I do not like lingering in such human spaces as the classroom. The moment the bell rings I reach for the door and leave. Clarke (1991) writes that "grief is at the nexus of human meaning. In bringing us to the brink of nonexistence, it also brings us to the core of our living as human beings" (p. 261). In these terribly human moments, I had the opportunity to claim myself as a human being among other little human beings but I remained absent.

In a matter of minutes, through gestures, body language, words, tone, eye contact and exchange, something ineffable and irreversible happens in that first pedagogical encounter. My being in grief significantly makes these missed encounters as I keep distant and fail to engage with them due to my sheer inability to do so. Danieli (1998) speaks of multigenerational trauma and argues that "the presence of an absence" (p. 24) in people who live in grief consists of a "depleted self and of an intense experience that is disconnected and forgotten" (p. 24). I think being in grief is like being inhabited by something that takes over so completely that it feels like an impervious layer that prohibits our being from being fully present to what we encounter. Hurst (2009) writes: "I reflect upon how we carry our histories of loss with us into the classroom: this loss could be death, but it is more multifarious than

that. This is loss in its broadest sense" (p. 31). For me there was a sense of loss in the disconcerting gaze of the students, as a new teacher. Perhaps the grief I was trying to conceal became revelatory in that overwhelmingly human space.

When I think of such moments now, it seems to me that I was enclosed in a certain loss of self caught within a pattern of behavior that came from my own history, one from which I could not escape—almost like a trap. Through reflection, I can now ask whether I have enclosed students in moments of loss, and whether I have been disclosed only in that revelatory moment. Grumet (1988) writes of *the look* in pedagogy as "also arranged in time and space." She suggests that the "history of a teacher's look is lodged in culture, in the social forms and institutions that exist at any given historical moment and through which society shapes the young" (p. 106). Students look at their teacher with particular expectations and there is something of a need in their gaze.

For me that important moment of learning in the encounter was lost, because as Britzman (1998) remarks, visual exchange puts the self into question (p. 30). My being in grief was caught up within layers of ambiguity, uncertainty and resistance and, consequently, my entry into the classroom as a teacher inaugurated a mis-encounter. Buber (1965) observes that "If education means to let a selection of the world affect a person through the medium of another person, then the one through whom this takes place, rather, who makes it takes place through himself, is caught in a strange paradox" (p. 100). The paradox here is to be found in the way a teacher influences the students through the filter of her or his own lived history, sense of reality and being. The teacher's sense of the student may have little, if anything, to do with the students' own lived reality (Buber, 1965).

The possibilities and limits contained in pedagogical encounters are such that these encounters ask for surrender to humanity and vulnerability. For me, vulnerability and being

in grief meant more resistance. Vulnerability is like a dismantling of all that we constantly try to put back together in ourselves. My family had closed themselves to any kind of vulnerability in feeling their grief. It is a fragility we could not afford. As Hurst (2009) suggests, "once one experiences grief and loss (in the broadest sense), it is impossible to continue to think about the world in the same manner as before the loss (no matter how hard we may try to do this)" (p. 39). In facing the young students that day, my invulnerability came into presence and I thought of that as my power.

I realize now that when I resisted my own humanity and that of others, I came away feeling a loss of self, a missed opportunity and a weaker connection to my own being in the presence of others. What also came into presence for me that day was my teacher identity. I had 'become' a teacher in a matter of moments and now I had a new identity which made a demand on me that I could not comprehend. I recall feeling both overwhelmed and isolated. The loneliness came from having something new and unfamiliar in my life. Identity refers to who or what an individual is perceived to be, entailing both self-perception, as well as perception by others (Beijaard, 1995). I had a functional sense of what I was expected to do in school but I did not feel like a teacher. I found myself slipping into a definition of 'teachers' the way I knew them from my own educational history. I felt as though I were borrowing an identity and, in so doing, was burdened by overwhelming responsibility.

The heaviness and intensity of my being in grief was such that the work of teaching and the role of a teacher were burdensome; it was the human space of the school of which I was fearful, yet which daily compelled me to return. Soorya's environment was bringing something new, unfamiliar and unusual into presence for me. I now recognize this something new, as a space without grief. In my first few minutes in this school I found the hum of voices mingled with laughter, free of restraint and inhibition and casual tone of voices are heard from almost everywhere in the building. I found it odd that there was no silence, such

as that which I experienced at New England Girls' school. I watched as a teacher bent

intently, hand on the shoulder of a young student, listening with full embodied attention. Two

students rushed out of a classroom to quickly drink some water from the fountain. I heard the

strains of a harmonium somewhere in the building. A teacher led a group of kindergarteners

to the play area talking to them gently and patiently. She smiled at me. A few smartly

dressed students walked past hurriedly, wishing me well for the day ahead. I was introduced

to staff members in the staff room. I smelled freshly brewed tea and snacks. The bell rang for

the next class, and I was informed that I would be introduced to the students for my first

class of the day. I found the atmosphere of this school disorienting. I am reminded of the pin

drop silence with over one hundred girls at my boarding school, where no one smiled at

anyone, no one spoke without permission and the last thing anyone wanted to do was to talk

with the teachers. We feared them and almost wished we were invisible when they were

around. I wondered how things function here in such a casual atmosphere.

I recount the simultaneous feelings of oddness and familiarity as I stepped into a

school classroom fifteen years after I graduated from an all-girls Protestant boarding school,

also in North India, an institution weighted down by more than a century of colonial legacy.

I am used to fear, distance and discipline from this educational history while I come across a

totally unfamiliar and new pedagogy here. I felt disoriented and different. I wondered what I

was doing here. The school's ethos of trust and openness appealed to me instantly. It was in

some ways a comfortable but not a comforting atmosphere, a distinction which my inquiry

helps me deconstruct. Not so much the curriculum at first but this kind of pedagogy was in

stark contrast to the one I had experienced at home and at the school where I studied. It made

me feel different right from the moment I stepped into my first classroom on the first day I

began teaching. Something in the pedagogical interactions made me experience "the uneasy

feeling that things are not as might be expected, but strange or different" (Dall'Alba &

Barnacle, 2015, p. 1455-1456). I came away from the first day of teaching feeling like a misfit and tense from the experiences of the day.

I chose to continue my work as a teacher at Soorya even though I was unable to transcend the paternalistic pedagogy of fear, distance and discipline I had learned as a boarding school student and my being in grief, which was very well subscribed and suited to such a pedagogy. Dall'Alba & Barnacle (2015) argue that our knee jerk response is to turn away from the uncanny and bury ourselves in the familiar; what we think we already know. But in doing so, we also turn away from our own potentiality as a worldly creature; one capable of being-in-the world at all. (p. 1456)

I almost grasped my being in the world in these moments of difference, ambiguity, and uncertainty, but I lost who I am in not seeking. Throughout my life as a teacher, I was revisited by various lived experiences of New England Girls' years, and I found myself turning back once again to some of those postcolonial attitudes and inhabiting them. Discipline and punishment were common occurrences at the school where I studied, and retrieving some of my own painful memories allows me further to explicate my ways of educational knowing and being. For me punishments were an integral part of the disciplining process, very much a postcolonial pedagogical legacy They served both the offender and others as a deterrent.

4.5   The Tension of Pedagogical Opposites

The opposing pedagogies at Soorya and New England Girls' created dilemmas for me. On the one hand, I found that I could not transcend what I knew pedagogically on the other hand the warmth of the maternalistic pedagogy was very compelling, and I was drawn to the human space that it created and I resisted it at the same time. Prior to that point, first as a boarding school student, and then while attending college, I had had no problem in

conforming and being with sameness. Coloniality and postcolonial ways of being and knowing had survived on homogeneity and the lack of difference. I disliked being different.

Assimilation and absorption had been our ways of knowing and doing. It was the easiest way to exist without conflict and contradiction. This was the first time I had difficulty with it. I could not comprehend that the difference was bringing out the difference, I did not resist the difference. I was thrown off kilter by this difference. I now understand this from another perspective.

Most of the women in my family had been teachers or in some position or the other worked in educational institutions. I had grown up within educational environments, and I had been left wanting. Pedagogically, women in my family and my teachers practiced the paternalistic pedagogy or fear, distance and discipline. Feelings of professional ambiguity came and went as I negotiated the spaces of my personal educational history, the lingering impact of colonial pedagogies. and pedagogy as a confusing, complex space. The other complexity was that I identified with and taught English. When I first began teaching, English was a sought-after language, and to be identified as a teacher of English meant acquiring something like a status, and being ushered into a world of privilege. Lodged between these conflicting and sometimes contradictory spaces I found that teaching overwhelmed as much as it engaged me. The intersections I have pinpointed above remain spaces of complexity and ambiguity for me. These are lived experiences shaped by the push and pull of *being* and *becoming*.

When I entered the Grade Five classroom in that school on that September day, I was introduced to the students as their English teacher. My fluency in the language, together with the institutional validation of an undergraduate honors degree in English Literature meant that the school community was confident in my ability to teach the language, and that they deemed me comfortable with whatever additional layers of meaning were attached to

the designation of "English teacher." I had a similar level of confidence in myself, believing that anyone with reasonable communication skills and knowledge of disciplinary norms can

teach. It took me several years to understand and to become sensitive to my subjective presence as a teacher, and to respond to the subjectivity of others: those who influenced me, and those, in turn, who were shaped by my work in the classroom.

Within the first few minutes of my being in the students' presence, these moments of "becoming" were shaped by my educational history, postcolonial identity, by the social and cultural construction of teacher-student relationships, and by my status as an English teacher. These formative moments were marked by a degree of tact and by a generally hands-off approach on the part of my colleagues and school officials, signified by their reluctance to-intrude or intervene in my classroom practices. I came with few expectations, although I was culturally conditioned to adopt and accept certain behaviors. I did not come with any intention to remain over the long term, but there was nevertheless something particularly new and attractive, something indistinctly exciting about the pedagogies in the school that drew me into its world.

It is important at this juncture to elaborate upon my understanding of the term "pedagogy." I make a distinction between teaching as practice, on one hand, and teaching as a component of pedagogy. Teaching practice in India is content driven and within this space develops pedagogy. Teachers find they relate pedagogically to students through the content they teach. Stated differently, content drives pedagogy in schools in India. I have come to understand the deeper implications of pedagogy and its inclusion in personal and private spaces only recently through my graduate studies. Pedagogy, I claim, is how adults develop modes of being in their presence with children. This interaction between adults and children is characterized by words, attitudes, behavior, care, gestures, eye contact, and is nurtured by

the ways we transform ourselves to connect, engage and communicate thoughtfully with children.

Acknowledging the work of feminist teachers, Grumet and McCoy (1997) observe that" what happens in schools is always, unavoidably related to what happens in the kitchen, the office, the church, the theatre, the bedroom, and the shop floor" (p. 4). Pedagogy in this sense is then not simply what we do with children but who we are with them. I believe that through pedagogy, deeper, forgotten, or buried parts of ourselves and our histories surface. In the presence of children, for example, we often find ourselves vulnerable to them and to ourselves. Pedagogy therefore entails both a relationship with others and with ourselves, and is necessarily committed to questions of our ways of our ways of knowing and being, "a way of becoming self-aware, of constituting meanings in one's life-world" (Greene, 1973, p. 7). Greene's claim that "each person is "the author" of the situation in which he lives; he gives meaning to his world, but through action, through his project, not by well-meaning thought" (p. 280) forces a reckoning with our being. At best, such action within one's world may be inchoate, as Shaw (1944) duly notes: "it is in the relating to others, the communion of ourselves with others, that self grows and is realized through being" (p. 234). In retrospect, this has meant developing an awareness of my own being and the moments of intersubjectivity I have created, and to which I have responded.

Three years before I became a teacher I was already a parent. Being a parent in India is not primarily an individual responsibility, though it is mostly a maternal space. In my parent's home, it became shared with the school community since my home was on the premises of the school through paternalistic pedagogy. Child rearing is a familial space especially if families live together as some families still do in India. I was married into one such family. This shared responsibility has advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, this arrangement gives the biological parents little freedom to fashion a pedagogy of the home, since what the child learns

is dictated by larger socio-cultural norms. On the other hand, the child has the advantage of living with many adults and thus pedagogy is multiplied and divided at the same time.

I did not understand pedagogy in a distinctively personal way through my own experiences of being a parent because there were few opportunities to develop such an understanding. Though functionally a maternal space in both home and school, women (myself included) in my home and school practiced the paternalistic pedagogy of fear, distance and discipline. Grumet (1988) argues that it is the women who bring children from a woman's world to a man's and in that they become traitors (p. 25). I found myself doing pretty much the same and feeling the tension of the gendered and the colonized spaces of pedagogy with the complexity of my being in grief. This space of tension and absence surfaced when I entered the classroom on my first day in school. I was initially overwhelmed by being in the presence of so many children, and by the fact that I was the only adult there: the responsibility of the young students, consequently, would be mine alone.

What has surfaced for me through reflection are the strong sensory images of my own school memories and the paternalistic pedagogies of home and school. Such sensorial vignettes of the past constantly flashed across my mind throughout my teaching practice, almost like points of reference that appeared fleetingly and then vanished. The sudden pull of the new and the old in those classroom moments was bewildering. I look at these insights now as a repertoire of experiential knowledge on which I was continually drawing in the absence of formal teacher education. At the same time, however, I have found it necessary to unlearn some of the habits of mind and attitudes I acquired as a student and as a child. Van Manen (1982) explains that "pedagogy is not found in philosophy, but like love or friendship it is to be found in the experience of its presence, that is, in concrete, real life situations" (p. 284). My lived experiences of pedagogy at the school gave me both a sense of responsibility and a sense of belonging.

All spaces and words enclosed in the inverted commas – 'curriculum', 'pedagogy', 'encounters', 'lived experiences'- must come alive as human voices in their most profound human way, complex, paradoxical, confused and confounded or the elementally simplistic "how-to." Aoki (2005) points through the complex, sophisticated jargon of educational thought, planning, research, empirical studies, and he brings it to the messy humanness of the Miss O's grade five class where she lives in the tension between curriculum as plan and curriculum as lived. He points through his own journey as a teacher, researcher, presenter, theorist and brings it to the human care and watchfulness of his teacher Mr McNab that lingered in his young impressionable mind. His centering of the curriculum to "man / world relationships" (p. 95) points for "probing of deeper meanings of what it is for persons, (teachers and students) to be human, to become more human, and to act humanly in educational situations" (p. 95). In a world inhabited and overwhelmed by plans, objectives, outcomes, efficiencies, competencies, texts, books, words, worlds, Aoki realizes the risk of losing the human and he subtly goes into it to rescue the humanity of humans in education. He implicitly holds on to faith as he "unfolds a clearer vision of a different research reality," one that calls for the activating of humanity, subjectivity and intersubjectivity in teaching by teachers as a mode of being and becoming. My presence in the classroom as a student and as a teacher through grief I could not recognize at first and then facing losses and dealing with my grieving condition was a space for my being and becoming. In the next chapter I explicate how my postcolonial education was a source of grief and loss and formative to my understanding of schooling, and pedagogy.

Chapter 5: Understanding Loss Through Postcolonial Education

In this chapter I reflect on New England Girls boarding school in the hills of North India where I studied from the late 1970's until the mid-1980's. I examine the ways in which this educational institution still clung to its colonial traditions approximately thirty years after India established its independence from the British empire. I inquire into the ways in which education was a dehumanizing experience and how pedagogy remained in the confines of curriculum, discipline, rules and colonial attitudes. The everyday life in my boarding school existed on colonialist discourses—of hierarchy and unquestioned discipline, of Eurocentrism, and especially Anglocentrism—inscribed into the curricula of the school, and embodied by the teachers, students, and families of staff members within its walls. The loss of self through an educational experience remains etched on my psyche and it became burdensome in my teaching practice as I found it hard to transcend pedagogically.

My foundational years have been sculpted by multiple postcolonial curricula and pedagogical practices, and it was this same pedagogical framework that I reproduced later as I became a high school teacher myself. Before working as a teacher, I experienced postcolonial schooling as a student, and as the daughter of an armed services personnel (my father) and a school estate administrator (my mother). My mother worked at my own boarding school, and the consequent blurring of the line between home and school life led me to understand my pedagogical being and becoming in distinct ways. I describe a few memories from the boarding school I studied in from grade five to ten, some thirty years after the colonialists had left physically.

5.1   Postcoloniality

Here, I wish to clarify the terms "colonialism" and "imperialism" I use throughout the thesis, drawing on the relevant scholarly literature on this topic, while also charting my own course as it pertains to my singular educational journey and following the grain of my lived

experiences in, and knowledge of, postcolonial India. Implicit in the way Western scholars

have understood "colonialism" and "imperialism," as distinct yet intersecting terms, are

distinctions between the global and the local, and between past and present, with

"colonialism" encircling the world to this very day, while "imperialism" has been relegated

to specific times, places, and contexts (Adas, 1998). When viewed from the outside-in,

however, the distinction claimed by Adas (1998) is rather difficult to accept. Writing from

the position of an Indian scholar, and therefore with a fundamentally different way of

knowing both colonialism and imperialism, Krishna Kumar (2005) has shown how education

has served as a site through which imperial rule transgressed its spatial and temporal

boundaries, hardening into the conditions of possibility for what a country needed to succeed

in a future independent of its imperial past. In a certain sense, then, imperialism serves as the

point of reference, that which is necessary for the sustenance of colonized minds and bodies

after independence, and for their development and growth within a postcolonial world.

 At one level, this view implied an acceptance of racial differences between nations; at

another, a framework of this kind carries a sense of moral obligation on the part of 'superior'

nations charged with improving the lot of humanity. The British colonists looked at the Indians

as ignorant, childlike and morally unsound needing direction, guidance and control. In a country

where they were far outnumbered, the paternalistic pedagogy of fear, discipline and order

became their tool to subjugate and exercise dominance over the Indian populace (Kumar, 2005).

This kind of pedagogy was not only accepted but also normalized and internalized to an extent

that it can still be found in schools and educational institutions. Talking of the imperialists

"unconscious aspect of our education" Willinsky (1998) notes, "It may take generations to

realize all that lies buried in this body of knowledge as a way of knowing the world" (p. 3).

Indeed, imperialism has all too often been uncritically accepted as an agency of change in

countries such as India, which were supposed to be static, undisturbed by the steady march of Western progress (Kumar, 2005, p. 43; see also Nisbet, 1976).

Imperialism continues to influence text books, curricula and other instruments of school, college and university education, persisting in attitudes, power relations and hierarchies. Soorya High, a new progressive co-educational day school where I taught and New England Girls School where I was a student, provide a rich and productive array of circumstances, memories, and shadowed histories, in which this more nuanced understanding of the differences and similarities between "colonialism" and "imperialism" can emerge through this inquiry. The larger aim of my approach lies in demonstrating how much of the postcolonial attitudes persisted, and yet were altered, and in some cases diminished within the school community at Soorya High. The institution where I became a teacher was a place of learning unfettered by tradition, which sought to create its own pedagogy and ethos, thereby contrasting sharply with the pedagogical rigidity of New England Girls. And yet, something of the colonial ways nonetheless remained at Soorya. Teachers, like me, continued to bring in their postcolonial pedagogical ways of knowing and experiences to the school community.

I seek to understand the meaning and consequences of *the postcolonial*, locating my personal educational history within a larger discussion of the consequences of growing up in an independent yet broken India. Throughout this thesis, I use the unhyphenated term *postcolonial* rather than its hyphenated counterpart to frame my stories and arguments because the former is "more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequences" (Gandhi, 1998, p. 3). Independence, and its attendant gains, came with the loss, and deeply inflicted wounds of Partition. Two nations, India and Pakistan faced grief, and brokenness, even as the euphoria of freedom from British colonialism took hold. The simultaneous losses and gains of Independence and Partition meant different things for different people living in different parts of India and Pakistan. My inquiry is based primarily in north India because this is where I belong, and where

I have lived all my life. I am most familiar with this context in terms of education, history, culture, attitudes, and beliefs. Understood as a way of being, rather than solely as a discourse about education, postcoloniality shapes identities that are constantly seeking, always asking. Ashcroft (2001) observes that postcolonial discourse begins with colonization but does not merely stop when the colonizers have gone home. The postcolonial is not a chronological period but a range of material conditions and a rhizomic pattern of discursive struggles, ways of contending with various specific forms of colonial oppression. (p. 12)

What the postcolonial in India signifies is not therefore simply to be understood as a period in history marking the end of three hundred years of colonial rule when the colonizers returned and the country regained its political autonomy. Instead, the lingering weight of imperial oppression remains tangible in the broad, wide and deep stretch of influence that the British left behind in the people they sought to change through education, political institutions, socio-economic and class divides. Seth (2007) says one of the most direct and important agencies for the promotion and dissemination of the colonizer's knowledge in India was through western education (p. 1). Colonialism and postcolonialism erases or disregards entire cultures and ethnic ways of being through both explicit coercion and more subtle forms of socialization stamped with a colonial seal of approval. Seth (2007, p. 2) says that with the establishment of schools and universities in India dispensing European knowledge in the early nineteenth century, colonialism came to be seen as a pedagogic exercise. Western knowledge—ways of knowing and being—was consumed and absorbed in such a way by the natives that even today seventy years later, it is more sought after and prized than ever before. Seth (2007, p. 4) argues that it wasn't just the introduction of new knowledge and ideas erasing indigenous knowledge but it served to create new people. I look upon this as losses of different kinds: of selfhood and indigenous ways of knowing and being. The impact of such tactics on the generations of people that came under the influence of imperialism is most visible today within the Indian schooling system, where the ideological

structures, and policies of the colonizers imbue everything from textbooks to the ways in which teachers and students relate to each other.

In India, the effects of colonization on creating hierarchies governing what is deemed worthy of learning, and therefore of passing on to a new generation of students, persists in the selection of "present day pedagogy and curricula" (Kumar, 2005, p. 15), leading to the continued invalidation and annihilation of the "knowledge and skills that the native population possessed" (Kumar, 2005, p. 16). This exclusion of indigenous ways of knowing by educated Indians served further to alienate them from much of the population who did not rank among the elites (Kumar, 2005, p. 16). Native knowledge was considered not only deficient but also lacking a coherent and legitimate moral framework.

Willinsky (1998) notes, "Colonial education began as missionary work" (p. 93). Christianity promised more than just education, it offered a new way of life, the way of the colonizers. It opened up a world for native children as they had not known before. It dislocated them from their knowing and being. The New England Girls School is run by the Church now. Only Christian prayers, hymns, practices are observed compulsorily at the school even today. Knowing Christianity was another way of knowing western ways and this became our reality. Western thought, attitudes and schooling are very much a part of our postcolonial legacies, moderated with some changes to include some indigenous knowledge today. Willinsky (1998) contends that by far Western "schooling turned the concept of learning into the acquisition of what and who one was *not*" (p. 95). It created a new, unfamiliar identity for the colonized and continues to this day.

Education was, and often still is, defined as the passing of knowledge to passive recipients very much in the tradition of a "banking concept of education," which reduces teachers and students to "adaptable and manageable being" (Freire, 2005, p. 73). Boarding schools in postcolonial India served that ideal, and worked earnestly to annihilate anything

non-Western or indigenous. What we ate and wore, what language we spoke, how we behaved, and became accultured: these aspects of our being were moulded to fit Eurocentric assumptions and practices. Those who embraced colonialist pedagogies maintained an attitude of superiority and domination over others who, based on their worldview, knew less because they were 'not like us.' I grew up believing my education was somehow better than that of my other peers because I had thoroughly adapted to colonial traditions and attitudes. Yet, even though it had been denied to us by these same colonial structures, the call of what was our own was always present, whispering to us, beckoning from the shadows. I narrate a story from my boarding school days in New England Girls school to show the resonance of our longings for home and what we considered our own despite our European education and upbringing.

5.2   *The Tin of Sweets*

One of the girls, in the boarding school, brought a huge tin full of a traditional Indian nutritional sweet (Panjiri) from her home in a village in North India. It was the most delicious thing any of us students had ever eaten, and we would swarm her locker all the time because that is where she had to keep it hidden, away from the warden's prying eyes. The warm fragrance of 'home', the sweetness of her mother's cooking, the mouth-watering taste of the Panjiri, all of us digging with one much-coated spoon into that large tin, and the forbidden pleasure of eating in secret: all of this became a part of a larger experience, intensified by the secretive and subversive nature of our adventure.

If discovered, we would never see the tin again, and we would be dealt with consequences of the secrecy and the breaking of school rules which did not permit 'home' food. At the all-girls boarding school I attended from the age of ten to sixteen, life was lived in these stolen moments, outside the permitted forms of social engagement and cultural identity which many students and educators from formerly colonized parts of the world would easily recognize. Native food and language which form the most craved part of a culture was imposed over by mostly western food and the use of English at all times. No language other than English was permitted on campus. More than the consequences of speaking in our native languages was the shame and embarrassment we were subjected to, if

discovered. 'Our' languages were spoken in as much secrecy as eating out of the tin. While Indian students, like me, shied away from speaking our native language, non- English speaking international students would speak in their language among themselves away from the presence of teachers, without shame or embarrassment.

5.3   English as a Language of Privilege

The perception of English as the superior language and the language of sophistication, progress and status was given to us Indian students in such a way that we felt and thought of our native languages as a source of shame, guilt and embarrassment, even when it was no longer forbidden. Willinsky (1998) says of the way English lessons were brought to the colonies: "The schools have always made clear to students just where they stand and speak within the center and on the periphery of these languages, where civilization begins and ends" (p. 197). English language and literature, the way I was taught and later the way I taught, are legacies left behind by the British colonialists adopted unquestioningly by Indians.

I feel so comfortable speaking in English that speaking in Hindi, my native language, is sometimes an effort. The words just don't come easily enough. This brings me to Macaulay's famous question in this minute of 1835: Which language is the best worth knowing? And my other question is: Who should decide that? I have often been asked about what that means in a country with multiple languages and also where Hindi (the national language) is not accepted by many as theirs. Perhaps more than an answer, the question needs thought and sensitive deliberation.

There is a way in which colonial perceptions of who we are and should be, what we knew and should learn were internalized, accepted and normalized, suited domination and oppression in schools; in fact, some of these colonial practices still continue. The use of English as the medium of instruction at schools served as a weapon in the colonial arsenal, creating a pedagogical environment conducive to the formation of "colonial citizen" (Kumar,

2005, p. 17). This site of discursive practice looked with disdain upon anything other than Western education, skills, knowledge, attitudes and language. Drawn from the famous Macaulay (1835) vision of shaping the colonial policy on education to create "a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect" (1971, p. 190) as quoted in Willinsky (1998, p. 97).

The erasure of Indian epistemologies from the schooling system drastically widened the gulf among the various socio-economic classes of the body politic. Those who could afford English education were the "haves" and those who could not were the "have nots." In what is still true of Macaulay's 1835 contention, in my observation, Indian students are happy to pay more for "English" education and take English classes, and only those who cannot afford it are educated grudgingly in their native languages. What might be interesting to note is that I was taught English and I taught it thereafter not as a second language but as a first. In fact, Hindi (the national language) was relegated to second language status and regional languages continue to be taught as third languages. I was a recipient of postcolonial ways of knowing and being, and I therefore also transmitted these in my various professional and everyday interactions. In this way, I am implicated in the production of postcolonial citizenship and pedagogy, the experiential dimensions which my being and becoming reveals.

The use of English as a language of domination and division, between those who speak it and those who cannot, creates a less than human space in pedagogy. In a country already divided along class, caste, gender and religious lines, this serves to cause more fissures. It also creates fear of speaking up for shame and embarrassment for knowing the language to a lesser degree. The English language in which we were taught, and through which we learned, created a linguistic wall between the educated and the not educated, defining a language of prestige, honor, confidence and sophistication in relation to the marginalized status of India's rich linguistic diversity. 'Good' education in India means

education in English. What this has meant for me as a teacher of English is that I assume a persona which is not mine and I communicate and teach a language that is not mine. In doing this, I do identify with the language nor the culture of my education and upbringing though I know it is not mine. In contradictory fashion, however, most professional opportunities came to me first, because of my comfort with written and spoken English. At present, English language instruction continues to be a principal criterion when Indian parents decide which school they want their children to attend. For children in day schools, this means a daily transition between languages at home (the mother tongue), and at school (English). Faust and Nagar (2001) say,

> One has to adopt a new set of cultural values (including English reading, western
>
> music, and expensive restaurants) and give up the 'old habits' that intimately
>
> connected that person to her/his familial and neighborhood environment. (p. 2881)

The use of English as a medium of instruction isolates the child, alienating her from her own sense of being, and from her everyday world. For us boarding school students, this estrangement seeped into our being such that English seemed to own us in a way that our own mother tongue could not. Kumar (2005) argues about English instruction

> It created a shell within which the educated man's cognition could develop without
>
> encountering the world outside school and college walls. Exceptional men and
>
> women could drill holes through this shell, but ordinary students and teachers
>
> accepted it as the limit of relevant knowledge. (p. 17)

English was and continues to be the language of privilege and elitism. Willinsky (1998) notes, "This aim of colonial education was to transform natives into colonial intermediaries, turning schools into civil-service training institutions intended to support the administration of the empire" (p. 99). For me, knowing the language, speaking it fluently and having done a Bachelors Honors Degree in English literature became a gateway for me for work,

promotions, school leadership positions and many other advantages that most people not fluent in the language may not have had. My knowledge of English came to characterize my identity, both personal and professional, bringing me into the identity of elitism and exclusivism. False as that was, it was something hard to live down. The school community— colleagues, parents and students—viewed teachers of English with reverence, and wanted students to become like us. For me these register now as moments of loss as I look back in regret over what I feel was a sense of false reality, one that caused me to understand my education through the Western lens and worldview, embracing an attitude of superiority in the knowledge and fluency of the English language. This caused me to perceive myself and the world around me quite in the ways that was neither fair nor equal. It is in this way that it seems burdensome and bothersome.

When I started teaching, English was more and more a prized language, and to be identified as a teacher of English meant being ushered into a world of privilege. The Western persona and comportment, I had acquired in response to institutional demands, came to feel oppressive, although I did enjoy the opportunities that came my way. Lodged between these conflicting and sometimes contradictory spaces I found that teaching overwhelmed me as much as it engaged me. The classroom and the school community sustained me even as I was beset by doubt as to why I was there. It took me several years to understand and to become sensitive to my subjective presence in pedagogy, and to respond to the subjectivity of others: those who influenced me, and those, in turn, who were shaped by what I taught them. It also took me a while to understand that knowing a language well does not always mean one can teach it well. Within the first few minutes of my being in the students' presence, these moments of "becoming" were shaped by my pedagogical and educational history,

postcolonial identity, by the social and cultural construction of teacher-student relationships, and by my status as an English teacher.

5.4   Colonial Attitudes

Long after the colonists left, their legacies and attitudes remain in the beings of those colonized. In his analysis of the borrowed attitudes among colonized people, Freire (2005) explains that "the very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men, but for them, to be men is to be oppressors" (p. 45). The cycle of oppression and the structure of domination continues.

Oppression, distance, and hardness manifested in other ways as well. For example, there were no conversations between teachers and students at my boarding school. Smiling at teachers meant we were trying to curry favor, and giggling and laughing within the teacher's hearing meant that we were up to mischief. I do not remember the number of times we were punished for talking among ourselves and laughing. I came to regard both situations warily, even as I learned to stop myself from speaking. In the classrooms, asking questions and seeking clarification meant humiliation. Freire (2005) maintains that dialogue is an existential necessity by means of which human beings achieve significance (p. 88). In the absence of conversations between teachers and students a certain dehumanizing was evident. When people do not talk to each other they become islands cut off from each other's worlds. I found it hard to talk to the students in my classroom. The teachers at the boarding school thought students who asked questions were trying to signal that the teacher was not teaching well enough. Consequently, the girls learned to seek clarification of what they were studying in class from each other, rather than from the teacher. In my own classroom as a teacher, my students hardly asked questions and rarely spoke to me. I did not encourage questions. I think one of the reasons was also that as a teacher of English my fluency in the language became an inhibiting factor for conversations especially as students usually think their teacher knows more and better and the other was the pedagogy of fear, distance and discipline that I had put into place. Freire (2005) explains that "dialogue, as the

encounter of those addressed to the common task of learning and acting, is broken if the parties (or one of them) lack humility" (p. 90). I had grown with the postcolonial pedagogy of superiority and dominance that nurtured lack of communication rather than supporting it. I was aware of this and I did nothing to bridge this gap, and to facilitate conversation and informality. I recognize it now in the distance but I was oblivious to the way it was present in my being. Postcolonial ways of being persist unknowingly in us and what I encounter as dehumanizing experiences continue to make their presence felt as we dehumanize others in our world.

Edward Said (1989) has noted, within a colonial power structure, namely the power of the colonizer over the colonized perpetuates the "dreadful secondariness" of some peoples and cultures (p. 207). Education in India continues to be dictated by the West, sometimes blindly. Colonial oppression takes away the confidence of people to believe in themselves and what they want for themselves. Leela Gandhi (1998) explains that "the cosmetic veneer of national independence can barely disguise the foundational economic, cultural and political damage inflicted by colonial occupation" (p. 7). Building upon Gandhi's observation about the destructive effects of imperialism, I would locate humanity, and, indeed, our very being In the world, among the ruins left by colonial power.

5.5   Pedagogy

Once people have known subjugation and oppression, their multiple wounds cannot be healed by the mere passage of time, and their pain is not lessened by the proclamation and celebration of independence. The individual and collective psyche of a colonized people is fundamentally altered. Our very being is transformed often for several generations, and this is a truth that I have lived, and, subsequently, come to embrace. One of the examples being of the pedagogy of discipline, order and distance in schools and homes. For the longest time and

even now schools normalized this pedagogy that was practiced by the colonialists. Power relations learned and experienced through colonization are difficult, if not impossible to unlearn and replace, instead transferring to others within our families, and, on a larger scale, affecting how we navigate employment, and how we situate ourselves within the larger domains of society, politics, and culture. Fear is accepted and normalized not in its exclusivity but in its everyday manifestations of intimidation, and control. Much of the harsh spaces especially of corporal punishments is schools and homes was learnt through the punitive traditions of the colonizers.

Paternalistic pedagogy with its characteristic fear, discipline, control and distance also has its roots in the traditional teacher-pupil (*Guru-Shishya*) roles, and epitomizes a uniquely Indian sense of obedience to one's elders. Independent thinking, decision making and critical thinking skills among the young are dismissed as counterproductive to a society where it is the elders that know best and where they are the ones who make important decisions. This is manifest in practices like the choice of careers for children, and even the choice of life partner (for example, arranged marriages). Some of these traditions and practices can be characterized as truly Indian in that they transcend religious and class divides. These circumstances served the aims of colonial rulers over education even better, as they came to be looked on as powerful and all knowing.

For the British colonialists, Indian belief systems, traditions, and ritualism spoke of ignorance, moral decadence, and impropriety, running contrary to Eurocentric definitions of science, development, and progress. Educational curricula, texts, pedagogy and Christian values therefore were thought of as valuable, morally uplifting dimensions of school education. Pedagogy was a powerful site for setting the natives on the right path. Colonial pedagogies thus came to encompass a formidable array of rules and laws governing daily

behavior. Dining was also a site of pedagogical authority at my boarding school in Shimla. Daily portions of food (significant amounts) were mandatory for all girls of different body types, constitutions, ages etc. We had to eat whether we were hungry or not or whether we wanted to eat or not. I found myself feeling sick from the large amounts of food that I could not ingest and some of that trauma of food persists even today. Teachers and senior prefects would ensure everything served on the plate was finished, or else there would be punishment. If teachers accepted that there might be a legitimate medical issue, students were expected to report sick. The infirmary, consequently, became my sanctuary to escape dining. Any hint of insubordination would involve severe consequences to ensure that the spectacle of punishment inspired fear in others.

We identify so deeply with oppressive ways of being that other possibilities are hidden. Families and schools conformed to the same pedagogy of fear, control, distance and discipline. Culture endorsed it and political events such as partition added immeasurable grief. The loss of selves, what Freire calls 'dehumanizing' is carried on in the same repetitive cycles. In their analysis of systems of oppression, McLaren and Lankshear (1994) explain that

> Oppression has been experienced as a constraint to living more fully, more
> humanly: constraints born of social contingencies of power; of discursive regulation
> through interested and contrived social practices carried out so as to privilege some
> at the expense of others. (p. 1)

The oppressive ways of being and knowing were present in ways other than punitive action. Discipline and punishment were common occurrences at the school where I studied, and retrieving some of my own painful memories allows me further to explicate my ways of educational knowing and being.

Throughout my life as a teacher, I would be revisited by various lived experiences of my private boarding school years, and I found myself turning back once again to some of those postcolonial attitudes and inhabiting them. Often enough, younger students were punished by supervising senior students even more harshly than the teachers. The transference of power from teachers to the senior students resembles that found within larger structures of inequality: "the oppressed instead of striving for liberation, tend to themselves become oppressors or 'sub oppressors'" (Freire, 2005, p. 45). Sharing this experience within the context of this thesis, allows me to explicate my own ways of knowing and being as the very structure of thought "has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation" by which we are shaped. In what we experienced pedagogically at the school, we adopted an attitude of adherence to the oppressor because of our identification with him (Freire, 2005, p. 45). There was no way of knowing better and doing better. It was the only way we were taught to learn and teach. There were ways in which the absence of human sensitivity was driven stronger in those who had been served similar punishments. I was both a recipient and a perpetrator of these legacies. Punishments like kneeling on cold, hard floors were common and prolonged. This hardness in attitude and emphasis on discipline and order characterized my work in the classroom when I first began teaching. Said (1996) writes,

> The intellectual's spirit as an amateur can enter and transform the merely professional routine most of us go through into something more lively and radical, instead of doing what one is supposed to do, one can ask why one does it, who benefits from it, and how can it reconnect with a personal project and original thought. (pp. 82-83)

The absence of all kinds of questions, critical thought and reflection on what we were doing, whose worldview we were conforming to and who are we is something that confounds me now although it never used to bother me previously. Oppressive practices inducing fear adopted from

the colonialists persisted then and continue to exert force to this day. Fear had a big role to play with how we interacted with ourselves and others in the shadows of colonial legacies. At New England Girls, fear was an integral part of our psyche and the ways in which we were protected from outside influences was inherent in the architecture of the building.

5.6   *The Wall*

The long yellow wall enclosing a large imposing building on the top of a hill could be seen even from a distance. Its uneven contours interrupted by small rectangular pillars and forbidding length enclosing within it a world that sought to escape the outside. The wall began from the school gate at the bottom of the hill and ran up an entire side of the building, overlooking the town, main road and life outside. It was not high and yet it concealed the school, turning it into a veritable fort. The sounds, sights, tastes and smells from the world outside melted just over its serpentine detailing. Often, the girls of the school would sit on the driveway looking out at the world through the gate below. We almost never looked beyond the wall, reinforcing the barrier that it always was to us. Somehow beyond the gate lay a world that was forbidden to us but beyond the wall seemed nothing or something hopelessly beyond our reach. At the same time as it blocked us from the world, the wall seemed to keep watch on us. There was punishment for leaning over, trying to jump over and reaching beyond. During my time, no one had ever tried to escape. Girls did however, try to sneak past the gate to buy sweets and snacks from the vendor just outside the school gate.

The wall around New England Girls School also kept us isolated. Our world was contained within this wall. The wall is the metaphor I use for characterizing my postcolonial identity—impregnable, forbidding and hard to escape from. Older boarding schools to educate their children were instituted by British officers and their families; these schools were mostly in the hills of India which served as summer capitals. Staffed by teachers from England, these schools became the compound institutions of colonial cultures. Their appeal lay in educating students in Western ways, which were held superior by the Indian populace. I grew up thinking myself to be superior in the knowledge of English and in the possession of an elite school education. I found it difficult to assimilate and orient myself to the world outside of the school.

The architectural layout of colonial schools, such as the one I attended, ordered society in a distinct way and determined how students, teachers, and their families could and

could not interact with the world outside their educational institutions. The cultivation of students in good schools, that is, private schools, especially those coming from English traditions was an attempt at eradicating any residues of native ways of being in the world. Willinsky (1998) calls residential schools the most "effective" educational instrument used by the church on colonial populations. This was a place where Christian values were imparted and by keeping the social lives of students restricted to the teachers and other students, the inculcation of right attitudes and influences was assured. Such was even the architecture of the boarding schools that they looked like mini forts and fortresses, barricaded and impregnable, nothing from the outside could dilute its essence. The obvious reasons were security and safety of the school community but at a deeper level, the physical structure spoke of elitism, exclusivity, desire, superiority, and privilege. Our yellow and brown school uniforms, and the yellow wall became a protective space in which we identified as uniquely educated in western traditions, I am reminded that

> The colonial public school functioned as an indicator of the potency, the vigor, and the inventive superiority of an island and a culture separated from its colonies by an oceanic barrier which was both navigable and impregnable according to need.
> (Srivastava, 1998, p. 3)

In contrast with those of us who were boarders at the school, the day students could transition between being at home in their native culture and the Eurocentrism of the school. If this brought a dichotomy to their lives and being, I remained unaware. I do know of the intangible yet a sharp divide between "us" and "them." The school administration often used this discourse of "us" and "them," relying upon our acceptance of the superior status, implied and overt, of "us." The use of English gave us girls a certain Western persona. We listened to Western songs, wore Western clothes, read English books, ate two Western meals a day and generally imbibed a culture that was not our own, but which we nonetheless came to embrace

as part of who we were. This distinctly postcolonial organization of the social fabric of our school eroded our sense of a rich and fulfilling inner self. Recognition of this loss and awareness of what we lost came only later, and when these moments of understanding did arrive, the experience was often both painful and embarrassing.

What causes me most grief is the way I knew and understood myself and others as a teacher because of my postcolonial upbringing and worldview. The wall of English fluency that I drew around me became a site of tension and conflict. My harshness in discipline and distance from what called me as a human being in teaching stands like a weight and a burden I carry. The faces of students who looked at me and wanted something of my presence that I was almost afraid to give reminds me of my dehumanized self. All my schooling history was perceived by me and others as a privilege nd that is a site of great tension and contradiction. On the one hand, my self-esteem, confidence, privileges, professional opportunities came by way of my knowledge of English and western persona and attitude and on the other is the dehumanizing way all this came about. What I would have been otherwise, is a question I have pondered over many times.

In the following chapter I explore some of these dilemmas as I study my teaching practice and understand its complexities and tensions.

Chapter 6: Understanding My Teaching Practice

This chapter honors and illustrates the tensions and ambiguities of my journey as a teacher, growing pedagogically through every day experiences in the absence of a formal teaching degree, and significantly living in the presence of grief. Tensions emerged as memories of the teaching practices inflicted upon me at New England Girls' school haunted my efforts to make sense of and engage in the pedagogy at Soorya. Here I make a distinction between 'teaching practice' and 'pedagogy.' Teaching practice in India is mostly content driven and aims for successful examination results. Teachers strive to complete predetermined course schedules, tests, assignments and progress reports. Pedagogy, on the other hand, refers to teachers' being with children—through words, gesture, tone and tact—as a guiding, watchful adult presence in their lives.

Shame, fear and loss of self was a part of my schooling at New England Girls boarding school. My home life took place significantly within the walls of the boarding school where I studied, because my mother, a member of the staff, resided there. For this reason, I write about the practices and pedagogies of home and school as interlocking, and formative spaces of my being. Thus, the tensions of school were the tensions of home, and the teaching practices of school were the child-rearing practices of home. The first story I narrate here is of my first experience of loss, grief, shame, vulnerability, fear, guilt, distance, indignity and perhaps the 'mundane violence' at the boarding school resulting in a loss of self.

6.1   *Fear and Shame*

I am eleven years old lying on a hard, coarse mattress with my mother's heavy velvet quilt on me in a large dormitory hall. I have woken up sometime in the middle of a dark, cold night wanting to use the washroom. The old, red, tin roof overhead creaks and groans as the winds howl outside and now and then a weak, stray branch falls noisily and eerily on it. The other girls are sleeping. Darkness shrouds. I feel too scared and cold to go alone to the bathrooms at the end of a long corridor. The girls often tell stories of ghosts and spirits in this old building, once owned by British lords. I am terrified. I can't think of anyone I can call for help. I lay uneasily till I can hold no more. I don't want to wet my bed so I find a

corner in the dormitory and I relieve myself. I begin to dread night time. I can't understand why I am uncomfortable at night. I try to limit drinking water and other liquids but I am unable to control my bladder. I feel the pressure on my bladder and I feel ill at ease. I do this a few nights until one night I am caught by the senior prefect and shamed. I want to cry, but I dress and eat my breakfast in silence. No one sits next to me and no one even looks at me. Almost as if I reeked from what I had done. No one asks me why I chose to do this and no one ensured it would happen again. Almost as if just the shaming would prevent it, almost as if I had done it on purpose to bring myself to shame. I know all the girls talk about me, I am now not one of them but just one who made the dormitory into a bathroom for the night. I want to run away from this cold, unfeeling place but there is nowhere to go. I find quiet corners to cry and my eyes feel swollen from the tears. I begin hating myself for wanting to go to the washroom at night and I feel there is something wrong with me because no other girl stirs at night. I feel like I have committed a crime. No one talks to me for days. Shame makes its home in me. I learn my first lesson of repression.

My home was also in the school as my mother worked there. Surprisingly no one told her of this event. I didn't want her to know. I held myself close not to lose myself in the shame but I was overcome with guilt. I shivered from my loneliness. Years after, the girls still spoke of that night. I become afraid to be myself because I couldn't trust that I might let myself down again. I lived in fear. I learnt to control my bladder till I developed an infection both from the nights and from the days of being denied permission to use the washroom. I numbed myself from feeling miserable. I went on like nothing happened. It was the only way I could survive. Inwardly I cringe even today when I think of it. The cold has never left my body. Chronic kidney infection today is a scar of the fear, guilt, shame, and loss of self and through years of repression. I learned much later the kidneys are most impacted by fear.

There is something more in this account than just a fearful, lonely child needing to use the washroom at night. The inability to claim a fundamental human necessity, and the fear, silence, guilt and shame that accompanied this inability are more than surface phenomena. What my lived experience uncovers is a space of dehumanization created by the failure of an educational institution, that is, my boarding school, to provide support and nurturance to us children and the complete lack of pedagogical trust between a child and the adults in whom she could have confided. It did not matter to our teachers whether we students were accounted for as individuals each needing care and attention or that we had problems that

needed to be looked into by the adults. What is striking to me now is the impact that

my schooldays continue to have on my being

Leggo (2011) writes that "we are each shaped by the first years of our lives/ we learn

how to live with one another from the stories we have been invited to live with others" (p.

48). Our stories reflect the relationship we have with ourselves and a place of understanding and

articulating our experiences; as such they constitute an invitation to others to enter into our lives

and our worlds. Prior to writing this thesis, I had not yet realized that I would tell stories of my

grief and those of others in this way. These stories remain now that I am not teaching. Hurst

(2009) notes that "these are stories that are longing and hurting to be told and held as much as

they can be, and as teachers we are often faced with stories like these" (p.

32). These stories are no longer spaces of awkwardness, shame and fear for me. In fact,

moving these stories from their sites of shame, guilt and fear to a place of reflection and

inquiry has been a paradigmatic shift in the way I now interact and engage with myself as a

teacher and a human being. Sometimes I feel more than me wanting to tell these stories, I

feel that these stories want to tell themselves through me. This much is likewise true of my

being in the world through grief. More than my being in the world, grief reveals itself

through me. My method of inquiry in this thesis has therefore chosen me, constituting a

milestone in my curricular and pedagogical explorations.

In contrast to New England Girls, Soorya High prioritized the holistic development of

children, spanning experiential learning, extracurricular activities, sports, and school

programs, treating each part of the curriculum as complementary rather than hierarchical.

This interdisciplinary vision was progressive for its time in a city where most schools

followed a traditional model of learning based upon rote memorization. When I joined its

faculty, the school had only been around for ten years, yet was already highly valued for its

unique curriculum and pedagogy. I faced dilemmas and uncertainties of the kind that I was

not aware of at the time. Difference was the first thing I experienced on the first day of my practice, from the friendly, caring environment of the school, to its curricular practices, and, ultimately, the institutional openness towards whatever educational possibilities the students and teachers wanted to explore. The caring, nurturing space of the school was an uneasy place for me in its sheer difference to what I had been used to. I felt very uneasy and ready to flee the school right since the first day I started teaching. I avoided intimacy the more I found it among teachers and students. I couldn't make eye contact with the eager, curious and expectant eyes of the students. I found myself ill at ease like a square peg in a round hole.

Pedagogy had left me wanting to be comforted. I felt awkward with the designation of "teacher" when I first "became" one. I became fearful of my new identity as a teacher and inspired fear in others. My association with my own teachers had been through the distance of academic content, fear and discipline. I used the same model in my teaching. The cruelty of punishment and discipline, the focus on rules over children and the dehumanizing experiences of postcolonial schooling created a lingering sense of familiarity with and resistance to the profession for a while. Such feelings of professional ambiguity came and went as I negotiated the spaces of my personal educational history, the impact of colonial pedagogies, and an indifference towards 'teacher' as a new identity that I did not want to claim.

6.2   Responding and Resisting

I came into presence because I thought, felt and practiced differently from what I found at the school where I 'became' a teacher. Biesta (2005) observes, "Coming into presence is as much about saying, doing, acting and responding, as it is about listening, hearing and seeing. In all cases, therefore, coming into presence is about being challenged by otherness and difference." (pp. 62-63)**.** I understand this experience retrospectively as "coming into presence" through difference, but at the time it was discomforting, disquieting,

and troubling. I did not know then that my being and being in the world was being revealed through being with others. Biesta (2014) observes that "what is crucial about the event of coming into presence" is that this is not something that can be done in isolation" (p. 143). The invitation to teach and the school community brought the gifts of presence, being, and becoming to me.

Irigaray's (2002) philosophical elaboration of relational differences, prioritizes "allowing an encounter to exist without submitting oneself or someone else to the past, to repetition" (p. x). Situated pedagogically, the concept of relational difference allows me to understand the play between the paternalistic pedagogy of my being as a student, and the maternalistic pedagogy of becoming a teacher. I did not know how to meet the difference that I found in the school. Rather than seeking relationality with others as a point of "interweaving" and "interlacing" (Irigaray, 2002, p. 31), I withdrew. In the everydayness of teaching my students, I was 'becoming'—questioning, resisting, learning, disrupting, responding, reacting and thinking about what I was doing and who I was doing it to/ for. The griefless space of the school brought in new perspectives, ideas, renewal in thought and feeling and it became my space to be who I wanted to be. Irigaray (2002) argues that

> Becoming comprises ellipses and eclipses. This becoming moreover appeals to the
> other senses more than a speculative dialectic does. The energy that animates the
> process does not separate off from the body that it transforms and transfigures as a
> thinking is elaborated that recognises it as the source and dwelling of Being,
> including what that involves of the link—past, future and present—with the other,
> with the others. (p. 100)

Making connections to the past helps me understand the temporal and relational shaping of my being and identity. I take up the idea of becoming through resistance and grief. My being

in grief significantly made misencounters as I kept distant and failed to engage with them due to my resistance to pedagogy.

The paradox here is to be found in the way a teacher influences the students through the filter of her or his own lived history, sense of reality and being. The teacher's sense of the student may have little, if anything, to do with the students' own lived reality (Buber, 1965). The possibilities and limits contained in pedagogical encounters are such that these encounters ask for surrender to humanity and vulnerability. And vulnerability was where I was afraid of going for fear of falling apart. As Hurst (2009) suggests, "once one experiences grief and loss (in the broadest sense), it is impossible to continue to think about the world in the same manner as before the loss (no matter how hard we may try to do this)" (p. 39). I recall feeling both overwhelmed and lonely. The loneliness came from having something new and unfamiliar in my life. I make use of the term identity as referring to who or what an individual is perceived to be, entailing both self-perception, as well as perception by others (Beijaard, 1995). I had a functional sense of what I was expected to do in school but I did not feel like a teacher. I found myself slipping into a definition of 'teachers' the way I knew them from my own educational history. I felt as though I were borrowing an identity and, in so doing, was burdened by overwhelming responsibility. The heaviness and intensity of my being in grief was such that the work of teaching and the role of a teacher were burdensome; it was the human space of the school of which I was fearful, yet which daily compelled me to return. The school's environment was bringing something new, unfamiliar and unusual into presence for me. I now recognize this something new as a griefless space.

My work as a teacher became the site of sustenance as I was confronted by loneliness, despair, and melancholy in my personal life. I looked forward to being in school. Although I was still distant and fearful as a new teacher, the school community itself was respectful and supportive of me. The principal constantly gave me opportunities to develop more skills in

teaching, and gave me more responsibilities in the school more generally. My teaching became, in some ways, more critically engaged, more thoughtful. I cannot articulate what exactly brought about this change, although I want to understand this transformation against the background of the overwhelming, overflowing grief that came my way. I offer a story here of my resistance to some of the rules that organized school life even at Soorya High.

6.3   *The Examination*

The young boy in the room walked up to me within an hour of the mid-term examination requesting to use the washroom. Only this morning the teachers were called for a quick meeting to be informed that the use of the washroom would not be permitted to students for the duration of the three-hour long examination. There had been instances when students were found hiding their books and/or reading from slips of paper during the exam, in the washrooms. I listened to the instruction and wanted to speak up but the meeting was hurriedly dismissed as the examination was due in the next ten minutes. I looked at the visibly uncomfortable boy in front of me and I did not hesitate to give him permission. I knew I might need to defend this decision later. I found myself thinking of how students are expected to hold on to a painful abdomen… I wished I had spoken up at the morning meeting. The boy returned and sat down to write the rest of his exam. I wondered about rules, decisions, judgements and discretion. I felt compelled to do something about it. After the exam, I went to speak to the principal. She listened patiently as I recounted my own story of long ago and the child today. She agreed to think about it and discuss it with other colleagues. The rule remained, though teachers were permitted to use their discretion to allow or disallow students to use the washroom during assessments.

I find my inability to turn down the boy's request surprising only after I think of it later in the day. What surfaced for me in that moment against the rules of the school and the directives of the morning was a site of unacknowledged humanity. The loss in that moment of my insubordination meant nothing against the boy's visible discomfort. I found myself responding to a situation outside the rulebook. As I sat with the principal, I argued on behalf of the students, some of whom drink only milk before leaving their homes for school. I question the lack of sensitivity around how much we know the lives of our students and make a strong case in their favour. I do not know if the principal was surprised by my vehemence or that she was convinced. All I know was that she was open to listening to me and of thinking compassionately for the students.

The acknowledgement and acceptance of my humanity by others and the call it made to me, brought me closer to feeling and thinking humanly. Throughout my life as a teacher, I would be revisited by various lived experiences of my private boarding school years, and I found myself turning back once again to some of those dehumanizing postcolonial attitudes and inhabiting them. Discipline and punishment were common occurrences at the school where I studied, and retrieving some of my own painful memories allows me further to explicate my ways of educational knowing and being. I found myself involved with school activities, and engaging more actively with the adults, colleagues and parents. The way I taught, however, was still largely the same. I was distant from the students, nearness to them frightens me. Some students are beginning to seek me out for advice and guidance, especially for literary activities. I respond to them in a strictly professional manner. One day I entered the classroom and I found the students eating out of their lunchboxes. It was still almost an hour before the lunch break. I was reminded of another time in my life, as the fragrance of home cooked food wafted through the room.

6.4   Pedagogical Call

Van Manen (1992) explains that "an adult's understanding of a child's experience has something to do with the way this child stands in the world" (p. 137). I wonder how it would be if we turned this idea around to think of the child's understanding of adult's experience with the way we stand in this world. In the unconscious absorption of grief from my mother and her family, I was standing in their experiences through their stories, and, in the process, informing my history and my being. The young boy brought me into presence as a human being that day. I think of pedagogy now as a call: to sensitivity, humanness, action, thoughtfulness, and care (van Manen, 1992). I am not quite sure of the exact moment I became aware of the call. I think it had been coming for a while, but I was absent to it. I think I now understand why van Manen (1982) recommends that teachers ask

How can we raise the question of calling of pedagogy in such a way that in the very speaking or writing one gets a renewed sense of its elusive nature? Because to "see" the elusive nature of pedagogy as it shows itself and withdraws in the fact of our questioning we do gain something: if only a fleeting glance of what pedagogy is in its groundedness. (p.287)

Thinking back to my teaching practice, I recognize now that what I experienced as problematic was leading me towards new moments of insight and revelation. I can understand now what made it hard to live out the tough, distanced, and inflexible persona that I had carefully cultivated. I know now that my being in grief and invulnerability was reflected in how I interacted with students, and with my colleagues. I found many moments and incidents that asked me to bend, and I chose not to do so. Irigaray (2004) explains this kind of situation as follows: "to speak starting from the already known also paralyzes the becoming of the one and of the other" (p. 17). In denial of my own being and becoming, I was perhaps denying the being of others. My feeling of being disconnected from others in my world was doubtless linked to my own inward sense of being at a distance from myself. For this reason, my uncertainty as to who I am as a teacher continues to haunt my being.

Outwardly, I was successful as a teacher. My students had good exam results, and I garnered admiration from the school community. Awards, accolades, and recognition made me believe that what I was doing in the classroom was working. Inwardly, however, my sense of connection with who I was and with what I was doing was entirely missing. I felt numbed by the jargon of institutional culture, professional conduct and academic results. Van Manen (1992) notes an absence in this regard, claiming that "there has been little attempt to pose the question of the nature of pedagogy to dialogue the meaning of pedagogy in our everyday lives" (p. 142). What does pedagogy mean? Is the work of teaching and learning as ineffable as Manen (1992) suggests? If it is indeed ineffable and if grief in the classroom is ineffable then what would

teachers and students in grief be grappling with? And this is when I hear the call of the question echoing: *Who am I as a teacher?* Van Manen (1992) offers the insight that the pedagogical is identical with "this questioning, this doubting" (p. 147). When both my personal being and my professional life as a teacher become spaces of questioning, I am then confronted with more than just seeking, and existential crises.

6.5   Sites of Resistance

In the school community where I worked, educators often talked about *the circle of care* for students. This circle was regarded as an extension of familial care with the children at the centre, thereby implying that everything the teachers did in school should have the child as its focus. This practice was not only encouraged but also formed an integral part of the ethos of the school, and of the wider community and culture. This pedagogical approach was also made possible because the teachers were mostly from the surrounding community. There was what I might characterize as a culture of mutuality and connectedness, a shared framework of understanding and lived experience. Small class size was another circumstance that fostered a maternal *circle of care*. Nicol et al. (2010) explain that "caring is not located in individuals, but rather in the relations with one another. Caring is an action; it is something that is done" (p. 236). I found the need for constant care very demanding on teachers and one sided in the way that it impacted the caregiver teachers.

The problems encountered in the *circle of care* concept had to do with intrusiveness, with the personal becoming public, with easy access to the private information of both teachers and students. Compounding these issues, it seemed to me that the *circle of care* fostered a kind of neediness on the part of the students. In this child-centric atmosphere, I noticed students placing excessive demands on their teachers, and there was an almost palpable narcissism in the students' demand for constant attention. This was in stark contrast to my own schooling where the emphasis was on independence and responsibility. In the beginning, I found the *circle of*

care an intriguing idea. Soon, however, I found myself objecting to fussing over children in ways that gave them a distorted sense of self, and instilled within them a belief that everything revolved around them. I found no reciprocity in this caring encounter (Nicol et al., 2010). This was one of my earliest sites of resistance as a newcomer, but I did not consider my reluctance to fall into line with the *circle of care's* child-centered approach at the time to be fundamentally at odds with the institutional culture of the school. Instead, I remained inflexible with my own teaching practice. I came to feel a kind of distance from my lived experiences and from the expectations that the school community had placed upon me as a teacher. I knew I would be unable to sustain what I did not necessarily believe, so I did not even try to toe the line around the caring circle drawn by my colleagues. Yet I found myself drawn by this pedagogy despite its sheer unfamiliarity. It claimed me even though I was not dwelling in it. I heard the "call" of this pedagogy several times (van Manen, 2012), yet it was only after several more years of "unbecoming" that I finally responded.

In my practice, I was always absently present as a being in grief. Everyday encounters in the classroom presented pedagogical opportunities and challenges that I found myself unable to respond to. Grief, however, was relentless in its pursuit of me and the push and pull of pedagogy was unending too. Pedagogy becomes problematic in these spaces of distance, silence, awkwardness, uncertainty and absence. We become victims and perpetrators of the pedagogies to which we belong. Grief and loss had characterized my being in a way that I found myself numbed and absent.

6.6   Grief as an Affect in Education

Grief as an affect does not yet have a place in education though its presence is felt among teachers and students. The sense of loss in our times concerns not only death, but also the loss of self in xenophobia, racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and many other ways in

which grief comes. Losses need to be acknowledged with teachers and children facing personal issues like divorce, abuse, alcoholism and drug addiction in families. Losses and grief also characterize the experiences of newcomers to our schools – children and teachers who are refugees, migrants, immigrants and asylum seekers. The multiple ways of being in grief are not sufficiently acknowledged in classrooms. Grief as an affect is often avoided, and expressions of sadness are met with silence. Britzman (1998) refers to these missed opportunities as occasions of difficult knowledge and loss. Responding to this pedagogical gap because of having inquired into my own work as a teacher, I ask: how might educators recognize their own histories of loss and grief, and those of their students? Britzman (1998) raises a similar question: "We are back to the question of how students respond to the teacher's affect that is pedagogy and of how the teacher responds to the students' affect that is learning" (p. 126). The connection between affect and teaching/ learning is what I might have been seeking. It caused dilemmas because I came from an educational and familial history that had divorced and silenced emotions from pedagogy to a place like Soorya, where emotions seemed to be an easy and natural part of pedagogy for everyone else.

Educators researching pedagogy constantly question their own lived pedagogical experiences: "in doing research we question the world's very secrets and intimacies which are constitutive of the world, and which bring the world as world into being for us and in us" (van Manen, 1990, p. 5). The lived experiences of teachers thus call for greater attentiveness and inquiry. Dilthey (1985) suggests that lived experience is to the soul what breath is to the body: "just as our body needs to breathe, our soul requires the fulfilment and expansion of its existence in the reverberations of emotional life" (p. 59). The reflexivity inherent in this analogy of the motions of breathing aligns well with Archer's (2003) contention that humans' power for reflexivity lies in our ability to know ourselves, and to be ourselves. For Archer

(2003), "were we humans not reflexive beings there could be no such thing as society" (p. 19).

In much the same way, I feel that attentiveness towards lived experience allows pedagogy to emerge as a "place where care dwells, a place of ingathering and belonging where the indwelling of teachers and students is made possible by the presence of care that each has for the other" (Aoki, 2005, p. 191). Drawing further connections, my conceptual approach resonates with that of Palmer (1997), who emphasizes that "face to face with my students, only one resource is at my immediate command: my identity, my selfhood, my sense of this 'I' who teaches—without which I have no sense of the 'Thou' who learns" (p. 2). Through these and many such pedagogical incidents I have come to understand as entry points not only into my own being and becoming a teacher, but also as opportunities to critique who I was and who I became, both personally and professionally. I find myself agreeing with Manen (2013) "Pedagogy is that more elusive and invisible dimension that lies at the heart of teaching and all other childcare practices" (p. 7). In the presence of so much humanity, I found myself coming into presence not just as a teacher but also as a human being. The everyday interactions of the classroom inform and reflect our humanity as teachers and as people.

6.7   Who Am I as a Teacher?

Educationally what it means to be human matters. It matters that both adults and children know that that they matter, and that their lives matter to each other. Biesta (2006) suggests that "the question as to what it means to be human is also, and perhaps even first of all, an educational question" (p. 2). That brings in the question whether everything human is acceptable and also whether what it means to be human is already pre-decided and normative. Biesta (2006) opens the question of the humanity of the human being by engaging in education (p. 9). Making the case for education, Biesta calls it the act of intervention in

another's life "—an intervention motivated by the idea that it will make this life somehow better, more rounded, more perfect—and maybe even more human" (p.2). Arendt (2013) calls action the activity that relates humans to each other, corresponding to the idea of plurality. She calls "plurality the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives or will live" (p. 8). The perplexity of the 'who' question is such according to Arendt (2013, p. 11) that "in the modes of human cognition applicable to things with "natural "qualities including ourselves" that it fails us. A similar paradox exists in education is that through teaching and learning about knowledge, content, and through inculcating the norms of a given discipline, the crucial and integral learning of one's self and others is lost, something of the human is lost or least recognized. Schooling serves to homogenize people to such an extent that individuality and the possibility of coming into presence through difference and plurality becomes a difficult and often a painful process. *Curriculum as plan* (Aoki, 2005) does not serve to integrate life with education and *curriculum as lived* is not recognized and valued. Biesta (2006) argues that "the task and purpose of education is *not* understood in terms of discipline, socialization and moral training, that is, in terms of insertion and adaptation, but is focussed on the cultivation of the human person, or to put it differently, on the cultivation of the person's humanity" (p. 2; emphasis in original). The question *who am I as a teacher?* and how I act in the classroom are compelling in their wide grasp, going right into the heart, soul, and inner world of the teacher. They enter the realm of one's reality as lived responsibility and in engaged presence and action. Faced with these daunting questions, it is critical that educators know themselves and acknowledge what they do not know while also recognizing what is revealed about them and others in pedagogical moments. Freire (2004) insists that

> Education makes sense because women and men learn that through learning they can
>
> make and remake themselves, because women and men are able to take responsibility

for themselves as beings capable of knowing—of knowing that they know and

knowing that they don't. (p. 15)

The deep fissures in lives that teach, their varying and yet closely connected identities, their presence and absence call for reflective and reflexive inquiry if pedagogy is to be a site with transformative possibilities, a space that allows for authenticity in *being* and *becoming*.

In exploring my own pedagogy, I have come to think of authentic presence as that which is open to, and can be opened by pedagogical encounters both actual and missed. Teaching, as Aoki reminds us, is "fundamentally a mode of being" (Aoki, 1991, p. 160). There is something about the presence of children that calls forth the teacher's being, inviting a fulsome, and unqualified presence. Van Manen (2003) argues that "we truly open ourselves to a child's way of being when we are able to experience openness ourselves" (p. 85). Arendt (1961) similarly asks for openness and engagement in educational responsibility. Invitations to *being* and *becoming* may not always be readily forthcoming or easily recognized but nevertheless solicit presence, and a keen awareness of presence and absence. Such invitations carry with them the difficulty of engaging in a conversation with head, heart and spirit. As teachers, we are challenged through such invitations to recall a forgotten yet familiar path upon which our journey takes place, to whose origins we can never return. At least not yet. That which constitutes the self at any moment is inexpressible. Unconsciously we negotiate the self through these spaces: "the history of the self is difficult to reclaim" argues Grumet (1988, p. 166). This may perhaps be especially true for women, on whom claims of the maternal, the familial, and for whom the power of gendered and other socioculturally assigned roles are both confusing and contradictory. The lines between the professional and the personal are often clouded over by these competing identities.

For a while, I thought of parenting and pedagogy as two sides of the same coin, because of the pedagogies I had experienced at the boarding school and in my home life which was an extension of that within the school. The intersection of the maternal and pedagogical in my own life was so blurred that I did not actively seek a fusion that collapsed distance. In retrospect, I wonder how my ambiguous position in between the maternal and the pedagogical shaped my daughter's experiences as a student. As a teacher, I denied attachment and intimacy, acting out of my own experiences of grief, and relating to my students in a way that resembled how my own boarding school teachers had taught me.

As I make connections to my past and seek the inquiry and revelation of my being through being with others, I am confronted with what I had perhaps known but not understood. The question of *who I am as a teacher* belongs to my past, present and my future, as much as it finds its path in seeking me. In the concluding chapter, I discuss the need for distancing and taking a stranger's view on teaching practice to explore existential questions of who we are and what we are doing

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Listening To Self

In this concluding chapter, I revisit some of the dilemmas of my teaching practice that initially motivated me to take a sabbatical, and to pursue graduate studies at the University of British Columbia. My choice for the theme and topics of inquiry for this thesis emerged in response to certain questions that arose during the time I spent teaching students from grade five to grade twelve in India. I continue to reflect on the uncertainties, convictions, concerns, challenges, ambiguities, and recall my sense of growing unease as I encountered students as a teacher grappling with the consequences of my postcolonial being-in-the-world in grief. My being in grief was primarily the pivot around which my subjectivity and pedagogy as teacher was determined. I had a growing awareness of my numbness that overwhelming grief had caused and a certain brittleness with which I had encountered students. I had become uneasy and restless with the way pedagogy had revealed me and I had little idea what to recourse to take to address my ambiguities. All I knew at the time was that I felt a certain saturation with what I was doing in the way that I was doing it.

7.1   Contradictions and Complexities

A growing sense to know more, feel more, think more was necessary to address the gap between who I was at the time as a person and as a professional. The separation and the apparent unity between these two dimensions of the self were in some ways unsettling. I did not know my being in grief at the time and pedagogy at the school was growing organically on me in way that was discomfiting. I was still trying to retain my grip on discipline and distance. I felt myself in contradictory places consequently. Even though I might not have been aware of it but the question at the time might have been: What do I really want to be and do? The stark contrasts between the two pedagogies—maternalistic at Soorya High and paternalistic from my New England Girls and my familial history—became acute. Perhaps by

now, my familiarity with the difference was such that it became less a place of resistance and more a place of questioning.

By the time, I had grown in experience in teaching and a growing sensitivity to subtler and more profound aspects of being with children in their humanness and the lack of expression and demonstration of it. I did not know how to navigate the contradictions and dilemmas. I felt torn inwardly and wanted to know more and make time to pause, and to reflect on what I was experiencing. I felt the pull to leave the school and I felt a sense of belonging to teaching, and of being called to be more reflective and human in practice. My initial resistance to teaching as a profession had partially dissolved, and, in its place, there appeared slowly and surely a quiet though uneasy submission to my calling as a teacher. Soorya High gave the liberty and trust to teachers to engage in their practice in way that enriched and enhanced it through professional development opportunities, conversations and discourses on pedagogies and community support. I distinctly felt the difficulty of advancing in my practice without attending to existing dilemmas. My sense of growing unease had to do with wanting something more humane out of my work in the classroom and the school, more generally. The presence that I had come into as a teacher became undeniably visible. It was a comfortable but not yet a comforting feeling.

7.2   (Un)belonging

Some of my dilemma lay in a school system that had never spoken to me when I was a student and now as a teacher, I found everyone caught in the constant striving for academic results. I had seen with great perplexity the failure of school curriculum to address the real needs of students and teachers. Although Soorya High had advanced in bringing about changes in the curriculum and teaching methodologies, way ahead of time, it was still not being able to address the gap in what I thought was a deeper connection to the child's world. A lot of thought and effort was being given at Soorya by the school leadership and teachers to

make learning experiential and relevant yet I felt there was not enough study and research into what we were trying to do. Mostly it seemed like experimentation, at best it was a fusion of many philosophies and ideas in education that seemed exciting and very confusing at the time. Although my concerns about school curricula and its failure were those of other colleagues as well, it was a symptom not the cause for my seeking. My dilemmas around my teaching practice were, to a significant degree, subjective. In one of my first classes during the first week of my graduate studies, the question of who am I as a teacher was brought up in discussion. My most immediate answer to that was: I don't know, I don't know how to think of this question. This question has not left my side ever since then. Serendipitously, I had chanced on this profound existential question, and its intersection with questions of identity, As I bring this thesis to a close, I persist in pursuing this question, and it continues to pursue me. Once again, I turn to the existential philosophy of Heidegger, and to Maxine Greene's idea of teacher as stranger, with the aim of lingering over the dissonances, and inhabiting the feeling of distance that has been so much a part of my pedagogical way of being.

Two years before I finally left my practice, I had the uncanny sense that I was going to leave. It was not the stress of work that made me want to leave the school where I was teaching, by that time I had become used to practicing amidst the tensions and dilemmas. Going further, it was not because of a lack of interesting work to keep me involved. I was involved in conversations with colleagues, and with the school principal on curriculum planning and design these served as further sites of inquiry and participation in school life. In addition, I was attending conferences and expanding my professional networks within the teaching community. I had been on a semester-long Fulbright teaching program in 2012 at the University of Maryland, United States, that provided me with new experiences and modes of understanding that I brought back to my school to share with students and colleagues. The school community was supportive and genuinely happy with my work. Yet something did not

sit well, something was disclosing itself, and I could neither see nor hear it distinctly, yet I felt its presence constantly.

Heidegger (2010) provides a helpful way of understanding this discomfiture when he writes that "the call is lacking any kind of utterance. It does not even come in words, and yet it is not at all obscure" (p. 263). My uncertainty was compounded by irony: when I started teaching, I felt confident, and to some degree comfortable, but as I grew in experience and achievement, I felt increasingly unsure of what it meant to be a teacher, and of who I was as an educator. For Heidegger (2010), "the call does not need to search gropingly for someone to be summoned, nor does it need a sign showing whether it is he who is meant or not" (p. 263). The call to distance from my practice came in forms other than dilemmas. It came as saturation and also as a deeper interest and engagement with my practice. Questions such as: What was I doing? How does the work I was doing intersect with who I am in being? Why did I feel no joy in my work despite outward recognition and success? What was bothering me about my practice? Perhaps it was time to explore and understand what I had been doing.

7.3   Estrangement

I often felt torn between wanting a deeper connection to my work as a teacher, and what I felt to be my severe limitations. After some fifteen years in the classroom, starting from being a stranger in pedagogy, I felt like I was facing another kind of estrangement, one that I needed urgently to explore in depth and one that caused unease of another kind. Pinar (1998, p. 1) recalls Maxine Greene asking a packed Louisiana State University hall in 1996, when she was eighty years old: What is the meaning of what I have done? What has my work meant? He writes that she spoke to the audience almost as though she was speaking intimately to herself. Near the end of her speech she asked, who am I, and herself replied, "I am who I am not yet." (Pinar, 1998, p. 1). In that existential question and its answer, Greene gestures towards "the future that draws her, the future that calls to her" (Pinar, 1998, p. 1).

Elsewhere, in her own writings, Greene (1973) urges teachers to take a stranger's point of view on everyday reality. To proceed thus is to look inquiringly and with a sense of wonder at the world, "it is like returning home from a long stay in some other place" (p. 267). It is like being estranged, a feeling of detachment from all that you tend to hold dear. Distancing might be a way to describe the process of strangeness- a withdrawal from the familiar so as to be able to see more clearly. A shift in perspective comes from removing ourselves from the everyday familiarity of our work. It is in a way a chance and a choice to see from a distance what isn't quite visible in nearness.

For me, this kind of distancing was different from my pedagogy of distance. Here I was distancing from practice and from educational practices that were expected of me as a teacher in the Indian education system, with which I found overwhelmed frequently. An example of this was the teaching of English. Since I taught English, teaching the language and enjoying its nuances were in constant conflict with scoring well in the subject. I struggled with creating a love for the language among children for whom English was not a first language, and among parents who wanted them to speak in no other language but English. I felt overwhelmed by so many expectations and demands in a system where knowing English well is a ticket to success and confidence in the world. My knowing the language from a wounding history and teaching it to a community which looked at me in awe created a space that felt hypocritical and contradictory. I struggled to make sense of the work I was doing and how it felt personally as a human being.

The connections we make to the work we do as teachers, and what pedagogy means for us, tie us closely to who we are. Existential questions not only appear from time to time, but also consistently over a given span of time. In my own case, I found myself unable to extricate myself from such compelling questions, and this inseparability of questioning from practice brought about not only my split from teaching, but also brought me to a space of

exploration and inquiry far from the spaces with which I was familiar. I chose to undertake my inquiry at a distance from my teaching practice, and from spaces that were familiar, sites that seemed to immerse the educational system and the practice of everyday teaching and people that had both absorbed and reminded me of my grief, my home and family. Proximity had rendered short sightedness. Both distance and estrangement revealed to me the layers of complexity that I have subsequently been able to explore in this thesis.

Being and becoming a teacher demanded my presence with children in a way that I could not fully realize. In my encounters with them, I found myself afraid: incapable of being without the distance and discipline that had shaped my postcolonial being so deeply. I struggled with my being in grief most in my teaching practice due to resisting and holding on to the tightly held pedagogical beliefs that took hold during my boarding school years, I was now beginning to question, and to edge into a space of discomfort.

The other space of questioning was the difference I found myself in constantly at Soorya High. This was in stark contrast to the ways f knowing and being, as members of a displaced community, forced to reckon with life as strangers in our own country, we wanted to assimilate, annihilate, make obscure, forget, to become other—whatever allowed us to not feel afraid. There was safety in homogeneity. For the first time I felt unafraid of being different. I was identified as a differently thinking and practicing teacher and there was no judgement or criticism of me.

The past constantly beckons in ways that we don't fully understand. The modes of understanding and recollecting the past through memory is a crucial aspect of our history and identity which serves the present. The surfacing of intergenerational grief is one such manifestation of its presence. The silence of this trauma is deafening. The call to existence come ridden with doubt and uncertainty. Greene validates, "It is up to me to choose, to create an identity in the light of what I am not yet, in pursuit of possibility" (p. 1). In embracing this

yearning for knowing, belonging and being, reclaiming the past and making connections to our present, in order better to situate ourselves in the future, lie the strands and knots of who we are, and of who we can choose to become from this knowing.

7.4   Homecoming

Willful estrangement in such a context becomes problematic for the self and for others. Maxine Greene's (1973) call to be a stranger comes covered in disbelief and perplexity. The disbelief of losing comfort. Why would I want to be a stranger with what is now familiar? Strangeness comes also with too much familiarity, with lack of trust, direction, purpose, commitment and stability. All that we seek and strive for in work and life. Greene returns us to the self when she asks: Who am I? Without this starting point, the frame of reference is incomplete. Neither can I know what I am doing, nor can I understand what it means to me and others. The strangeness she advocates is a sort of "homecoming," a return to ourselves after having been away for a while. Homecoming, as soothing as it sounds, is nonetheless a complex journey because we do not return as the same person we were when we left. We now see, feel and think differently, having made a journey beyond home. In unravelling the layers that make us who we are, we are surprised at what we find. It is here that wonder and questioning sets us free from what always made us afraid. Inquiry into the self, then, constitutes an act of rebellion. Greene (2011) rescues us from the angst that rebellion sometimes causes when she argues that

> The responsibility is great. So is the felt vulnerability. The choosing is intense.
>
> But each one of us, somehow can break with purposeless and airless confinement
>
> in square rooms. It is up to us to light the fuse. (p. 9)

Julia Kristeva (1991) identifies the stranger as a foreigner: "the foreigner feels strengthened by the distance that detaches him from the others as it does from himself and gives him the lofty sense not so much of holding the truth but of making it himself…" (p. 7).

My journey to the University of British Columbia less than two years ago, perhaps has situated me as a foreigner. Although I was not necessarily aware of this at the time, my search was for myself in my teaching practice: the urgency of my task has been in making meaning of myself and my work. I have found myself to be alien here, distanced from all that was familiar and known. The yearning to belong, was accompanied by a giant leap into more un-belonging, an experience which felt initially contradictory, and more ambiguous than I could ever have imagined. I moved from feeling estranged as a teacher, to feeling like a stranger half a world away from where I have belonged. The seeking is not easy especially if what is sought is ambiguous. My being in grief was ambiguous and ineffable. As Kristeva (1991) explains, "a secret wound often unknown to himself, drives the foreigner to wandering" (p. 5). My wandering was bringing me home to all the spaces within. Many a time, I tried to think of it as the ancient Indian tradition of *sanyas*, one of the four age-based life stages that calls for a willful distancing from the known world with the aim of exploring and understanding self and others. Literally *sanyas* means to put all of it down. When I look at grief as a burden and weight to be carried, the meaning of *sanyas* – to put it all down – has even more resonance.

During the time of my study and in my existential philosophic readings I realized I might have to pursue the question—who am I as a teacher—by picking up the strands from my pedagogical ways of knowing and being. I cannot hope to unravel my practice and pedagogy without fundamentally locating and situating myself historically, culturally, psychologically, and emotionally. The dilemmas of self, and of self in practice are neither linear or straightforward. Where would I begin? How would I make sense of a history that was diverse, traumatic, complex, scarred, silenced, recalcitrant and concealed? Who would I turn to for resources?

**7.5	Presencing Vulnerability**

As I grappled with these questions, I realized the worth and value of lived experiences, and turned to my own life as the site of my developing inquiry. The challenge then became: What about the disquietude and vulnerability, the tender, raw, unvisited spaces that will come as I engage this autobiographical inquiry? Britzman (2014) advises that "we must learn to break open something between us that is unknown to even ask, what happens for us and for others in our search for freedom?" (p. 9). In the most inexplicable and unpredictable way, I went to the most vulnerable part first: my being-in-the-world in grief. This has been not so much the central focus, as it has been the ground for unravelling the core of my pedagogy, and the formative shaping of my being and becoming. The ambiguous turns, truths and traumas became productive lenses for examining my identity through schooling, family stories, strangeness, familiarity and estrangement. Danielewicz (2014) uses identity as the central piece in the construction of a teaching self, arguing that "because identities are conditional, restless, unstable, ever-changing states of being, they can never be ultimately completed. Though identities are fluid, individuals do have recognizable selves" (p. 3). The unity and separation of the self from teaching practice might be very dynamic and constantly evolving concept. It seems like something one has to choose between everyday requiring discretion and wisdom. The choice of purposeful, meaning filled action then to me signals the presence of self. The risk of knowing yourself and the work you do is the risk of presence to oneself and others. The divisions we make between the personal and the professional blur at times like a Venn diagram with overlapping spaces that somehow converge into its own space of our seeking.

Questioning and seeking are spaces of openness and possibilities. My postcolonial education did not teach me to question or to seek. I did not know how to teach what I did not

know myself- to question and to encourage seeking. In my family, exploring was akin to disturbing what was carefully and painfully contained. I belonged to the experiences of others and to a history of pedagogy shaped by others. That is what I could offer to my students and may have created a similar chain for them too that I couldn't see while being immersed in my practice.

Here it is pertinent to draw a distinction between feeling alien and alienated, on the one hand, and experiencing a sense of estrangement from practice and from the self. "Alienated teachers," Greene (1978) admits, are "out of touch with their own existential reality," and, as a result, "may contribute to the distancing and even to the manipulating that presumably take places in many schools" (p. 29). Self-estrangement is a signal of absence to self and to others. The loss of connection to what constitutes the self leads to objectification of our identities, our work, and of others in our world. Identity and identification then become dangerous for those who believe in their fixity and tangibility. It closes off possibility to be and become in unexpected ways. The critical point Greene (1978) makes is one of choice and responsibility. Most teachers have chosen the profession of teaching and thus in a way feel accountable and responsible for their work and to their profession. I, on the other hand, resisted becoming a teacher, and so, for the longest time, I felt alienated from the work that I was doing. Until that point, the act of waking up and going to teach every morning for the initial years meant completing the teaching of content for the day, marking assignments, providing feedback for work and leaving for home after the day's work feeling that I had accomplished much.

7.6   Possibilities

Fortunately, the school where I taught offered the chance to seek the possibilities and potential of one's own practice even though it had its own embedded ethos of care. Unused to being free to shape the possibilities of who I could be, I was not sure who I wanted to or

could be as a teacher. Like the first day in the classroom, surrounded by thirty small human beings for whom I was solely responsible. I felt the same disorientation and the same terror. I had little idea who I wanted to be. The fear of freedom is so great that it creates a hard shield. Palmer (2000) explains that "vocation does not come from willfulness. It comes from listening. I must listen to my life and try to understand what it is truly about—quite apart from what I would like it to be about—or my life will never represent anything real in the world, no matter how earnest my intentions" (p. 4).

I was taught to listen to others in school, yet I did not know how to listen to myself. When I had the chance and choice to hear and listen to myself, I almost did not know where and how to begin. What came my way then was not through active listening, speaking, hearing and choosing but by way of serendipity including my presence through others. "The deepest vocational question is not ""What I ought to do with my life?" It is the more elemental and demanding "Who am I? What is my nature?"" (Palmer, 2000, p. 15). Along similar lines, Britzman suggests that "we do know that education wants something from the teacher, but what does the teacher want for herself/ himself?" (p. 125). The meaning we make of our lives comes laden with interpretations. How do we interpret what we do? Is it interpretation we seek, or do we get trapped by interpretive efforts, by what Britzman (2014) calls the "narrative impulse?" The construction of meaning through our memories and stories "a delicate container that holds what feels in words and deeds disparate, persecutory and estranging" (p. 129). The process of writing our stories is itself a delicate balancing act. One that requires presence and distance at the same time.

Connelley and Clandinin (1994) think of life as story lived with a plot, protagonist, and characters in social and cultural settings; similarly, we become characters in others' stories. "It is story that confers meaning. It is in the stories of ourselves that we tell ourselves and tell others that we make and re-make meaning" (p. 150). They believe "if a teacher understands (can tell)

the story of her own education, she will better understand (tell the stories of) her students education" (p.150). People tell their stories to understand their experiences of the world. We live 'storied lives' and stored lives.

In the writing of my autobiographical narrative, I was made aware of the challenge of losing the world in my story. There was a pressing concern to narrate my teaching career in such way that I would not "risk the dangers of narcissism and solipsism" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 10). The other concern was that I might be seeking resolution through the stories I would use in my inquiry. My guiding principle became being faithful to the experience that I was narrating. I also realized the value of writing narratively about experience in not making sense of the experience itself but also of the experience of writing about the experience as way of thinking about the experience and my identity as a teacher. Britzman (2012) observes that, "The existential question is that just as we try to make from our learning a narrative of what we think has happened, we are also learning the happenstance of narrative" (p. 20). Narratives then speak of the experience and they constitute the experience itself. A story is not just a description of an experience or an encounter in the classroom, I must think of the story of the story. What is it storeying? What stored spaces are seeking me? Why is it a story I am choosing to tell? What has been lost in the story and what has been gained?

The possibilities of being and becoming lie deeply in not just the conditions I find myself in but also in the ways that I choose to perceive myself in the educational conditions and circumstances. "The questions of identity are ones that live deeply within me as I try to think about who I am, and who I am becoming" (Clandinin, 2012, p. 145). Nested somewhere in stories of our lives, stories we become, stories that we have heard and stories we tell again and again and stories we do not tell, quietly lies what sustains us as people, as educators and as pedagogues. Clandinin (2012) wonders about what sustains, interrupts and shifts in stories.

I wonder if that might be a story itself. What story wants to be sustained in me as identity? What story do I want to sustain in my being and becoming?

As a possibility of *Dasein*, can I remake the story of my life? Can I create an identity of my choosing through my experiences of teaching? As I think about my experiences, write them, think of them while writing them, the turn has already happened. I find a voice that speaks as much as it pauses to listen. Do I have the words to tell my stories? Can I lie on soothing white cotton sheets with the constellations spread out like stories above and choose the one I want to be and live in? I find here the stories that bother, stories that want to be heard and told, and stories that have been silenced too long, like abandoned dolls. These stories as metaphors live in me, and I live with the responsibility of telling them. And what of the voice that Britzman (2012) located in "institutional structures, biography and emotions" (p. 22)? I wonder if cultural myths of the profession of teaching, coupled with a deeply personal history, and a wounding education can speak without hesitation and inhibition. I wonder if I can show adequately the strains of a foreign presence even after it has left. And what of stories that are not yet ripe to tell? Will they tell themselves through me another time? Or perhaps I do not yet have the voice and the words ripe enough to tell these stories.

The dread of uncertainty that I felt had now become part of my quest. Britzman (2015) writes that

> If we have to feel before we know, if we have to learn before we understand, if we have to experience before we can think about what happened, and if we have to create our own minds to do all of this, uncertainty qualifies both the external and internal world (p. 97)

The trajectory of uncertainty spans loss and fear. Its pathway is bordered by that which we lack and may seek, and surrounded by all that makes us afraid. Britzman (2015) has argued that "symbolizing uncertainty involves the work of getting to know one's emotional

experience from the pain and vulnerability of learning from ambiguous experience" (p. 98). What does that mean for someone who teaches? Vulnerability, uncertainty, ambiguity and pain are not within the range of a profession where confidence and convictions are hallmarks of a good teacher and role model. Culturally too these are signs of imbalances and weaknesses. Phelan (2010) explains that "uncertainty and incompleteness are inevitably aspects of living and teaching so the question becomes how we prepare ourselves for and open ourselves up to the surprises that will emerge and confront us" (p. 324). In the admission of my uncertain state culturally and educationally, I risked undermining my professionalism. Uncertainty loosely or tightly held both become problematic. In framing a question to integrate uncertainty, ambiguity and dilemmas then sometimes puts a structure on these unsightly and ungainly areas.

The significance of the thesis and its questioning spaces taken from the everyday uncertainties of being and becoming an educator is that it contributes a new perspective on the role of uncertainty and contradiction in the formation of teacher identity: the ways in which my being and becoming as an educator have been marked by striving, seeking, finding, and yet, resisting. What I find with certainty is the tuning in to the human spaces that I have been missing for years, finding the humanity in myself and others that I might previously have denied. Recognizing and embracing grief as a part of my being is a big part in coming into my humanness as a teacher. This has been a significant part, although not the only part, of my graduate studies.

7.7   Implications for Teachers and Researchers

This journey began with my concern with how the mechanized and instrumental aspects of education dehumanize our existence in schools. I am deeply aware through both reflections and readings that it is important for teachers to study who they are as both humans and teachers, because it is these dimensions of being that impact their pedagogies. I have worked through the

questions and concerns of this thesis without sitting in moral or ethical judgement. Rather, it has been my aim to advance awareness of how subtle moments in the pedagogical encounter can lead to powerful transformations, as much for teachers as for students. To be in the world as an Indian woman educator has meant inquiring into the taken for granted everyday way the socio- cultural, historical and psychological ways in which one is situated and informed. *We teach who we are. And we can't teach what we don't know*. These words have been echoing since I first read them. Pedagogy belongs to many public spaces but it is also intensely personal: "as testimony, teaching flows out of the inner life of the teacher, affecting not only what is taught but what is learned" (Bullough, 2008, p. 9). If teachers are meant to open a world for their students, they first must open themselves and be aware of their pedagogical selves, of their beings. We teach from our innerness and we testify to our experience (Patterson, 1991). To view education only through content, evaluations, test scores and report cards is to condemn education to an inanimate space. Perhaps most significantly, this inquiry seeks out the human who teaches, learns, impacts, and is impacted by others in the educational journey. Through sharing my journey, I hope to honor the educational insights and stories of other educators, while shedding light on our being and becoming as historically shaped, culturally located, and pedagogically sensitive; as teachers, we are called to be keenly aware, thoughtful, mindful, and present beings.

Recalling Greene's (1973) metaphor of "teacher as stranger," (as cited in Britzman, 2009, p. 30), this thesis allows me to witness my own lived experiences, and their formative influence on my pedagogical identity, as an "incomplete project," (Britzman, 2009, p. 30), in which I am continually searching for what it means to be a teacher in relation to others. Grief has somehow brought me closer to whom and what I love. Anderson (2009) observes that "there is no love without loss" (p. 127). While grief is not a choice, it most certainly is the case that our lives are in

many ways disrupted, distinguished and determined by our losses. In recognizing the profoundly personal space of grief and loss, we open ourselves to understanding ways in which this affective dimension impacts teaching and learning in manifestly significant ways. There are significant ways in which research on grief can take shape in the future. One is to engage in ways to recognize the painful spaces of grief and loss in educational institutions in a safe and responsible way. Grief can look and feel like fear, shame, numbness, lack of presence and guilt. It can manifest as lack of engagement and intimacy. The second way related to the first is to encourage and open conversations about grief and loss in the educational community and one of the ways is to share stories of lived grief experiences.

I have not wanted it, but grief lit up my path. I acknowledge its worth and I honor pain for being my *Guru*, my teacher. I don't know what I would be without it—perhaps not myself. It has brought me closer to myself and others now that I embrace and understand it. For its presence, I am grateful.

Epilogue: Tell Me You Love Me

I hardly mention my daughter in the thesis except perhaps once or twice mostly in context of something else. I do not mention her for my own sake mostly because hers was the grief on passing of her father that shook me and made me shiver to the bone, and hers was the loss that pains me most now. I mention her now in her own grief. Only six years old when her father, my husband passed that Sunday morning, we sent her still sleepy-eyed to her aunt's house to enable her to avoid the trauma of seeing her father's dead body that would soon arrive from the hospital for the funeral rituals and the throng of people that would also arrive for the same. In the Hindu traditions followed by our family, the dead body is bathed and clothed in new clothes and then taken to the cremation ground accompanied by the family and other mourners. I did not know who brought her, all I heard was her deafening screams and wails, and I do not know who took her away after. The grief in her screams as she must have witnessed the lifeless body of the man who loved her like no other and the overwhelming presence of people, some of whom had to wait outside as there was no room left inside the house, must be a trauma she endures and that I cannot forget.

In the moment of grief, pedagogically it was not left to me to decide if I wanted my daughter to witness a heart rending scene such as this. I was taken out of my hands. Someone decided, with all good intentions, that she would not have closure if she did not see him once before the cremation. I often wonder about the wisdom of putting a child through such horrific trauma and I have not been able to bring it up with her or anyone else after. I still hear her screams sometimes and wonder what her father's passing has meant to her and how she carries that grief. I wonder what it is not to know a father and only hear about him through the stories I tell her about him. I wonder about the spiral of history. Will she need a story to know the man as familiar and unfamiliar? Will she need a story to uncover her grief as familiar and unfamiliar? Leggo's (2011, p. 48) words haunt my daughter's grief, through me*:*

All my life I have wanted my father to hold me in his arms and tell me, I love you

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