

**A Dissertation
On**

FEMINIST ACTIVISM ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN INDIA

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation titled “**Feminist Activism On Digital Platforms In India**” is an original work prepared and written by me, under the guidance of Dr. Robi Augustine, the program chair, Journalism and Mass Communication program, Navrachana University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication.

This thesis or any other part of it has not been submitted to any other University for the award of other degree or diploma.

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I am thankful to my parents and friends.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Prarthana Parmar', with a stylized 'P' and a horizontal line under the name.

Prarthana Parmar

I whole heartedly dedicate this work

To

My friends, family and my guide.

ABSTRACT

Feminist Activism On Digital Platforms In India

This research thesis analysis the underlying social and technological factors that explain the revival of feminism, and precisely analyze how feminists use digital media to spread awareness for their cause. It reveals the results of many campaigns and protests done by feminist activists in India; however, it also examines the broader implications of the evolution of feminism in Western countries. The thesis is based on the research methodology of Content Analysis, where in various research materials including books, research articles, newspapers, online news, movies and various other platforms meant for consumption of information are used as a tool. The thesis examines the diversity of feminists and how digital media have immensely contributed to the rise of a new leadership and of new organizational practices. Young female activists are experts in producing visual narratives (images, video, etc.), in using unconventional series of action and in networking. They make events, campaigns, online communities which are widely echoed in the public as well as virtual sphere and the mediation of digital media leads to a form of participatory activism where the society is in the constantly progressing from the clutches of rigidity towards the freedom of a safe space for the female gender. Connectivity widens the audience and contributes to the building of virtual communities. However, the high visibility of digital feminism after the advent of Internet, it led to the increase in the female voices being heard by a global audience within no time. Finally, questions remain about the empowerment of feminists at a time when conservative forces are still visible in our society.

Keywords: Feminist, Activism, Digital platform, Empowerment

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Digital media is commonly perceived as a new source of empowerment for feminist activism and is often considered as having a large contribution to its revival and spreading awareness at a quicker pace. However, did digital media really transform the pre conceived notions regarding the feminist movement as a whole? Does feminism mean the same thing today as in the seventies? Are activists similar to those of previous generations? Has feminism mainly been reduced to digital visibility and connectivity? Is there any change in the foundations of feminist discourses? Do digital media foster the widening of the feminist community? To sum up, in the age of a widespread enthusiasm for digital technologies, we propose a critical perspective and analysis on the current evolution of feminism. This thesis analyze the forms and the strategies of online feminism in India, the gradual shift of protests and campaigns to the virtual sphere and examining all the online campaigns and protests globally and specifically in India , its results also have broader implications regarding the evolution of new forms feminism in other Western countries. The scope of the thesis focuses more on the sociological dimensions of digital feminism by adopting an analytical approach and it tackles the question of the audience which was not covered in various feminist movements.

Activism had always been mainly centered to the concept of networks and communities functioning in harmony. After the first 2000s policy, there has been an ideal replacement platform: on-line social networks, which hugely replaced the old methods of campaigns and protests . (Hester Bear, 2016:31)

This thesis looks at how the feminist community is using various social networking sites as a tool for activism to make global change. This thesis explores several areas of this topic: how female activists are using various social media platforms as a tool for activism, the prevalence of Inter sectional Feminism among the community, the worldwide aspect of the

digital media sphere as a tool for activism and therefore the social impact which it has had offline. However, the thesis specifically stresses at the feminist community using the social networking websites like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to form a global modification system. This thesis explores many areas of this topic: however feminine activists are using such tools for activism; the prevalence of Inter- sectional Feminism exchange of narratives among the community; the worldwide side of social media handles as a tool for activism; and therefore, the social impact it has had on the society as a whole.

The review of the Indian literature showed that, despite the large number of gender studies about male-female inequality or LGBTQ+ issues, the recent vivid feminist digital activism is new as a subject for study and research. Moreover, researchers have studied digital leftist and alternative activism but ignored the digital feminism. In his research, Judy Wajcman noticed a decade ago that “Feminist theories of gender and technology have come a long way hand in hand over the last two decades. Long ago before the early second-wave feminism was generated, the role of technology was emphasized in reproducing patriarchy. During the 1990s cyber feminist writer’s celebrated digital technologies as inherently liberating for women”. (Wajcman, 2007:287)

Despite a few studies on movements lead by women, research actually strives when social media exploded during the first decade of the 21st century and empirical studies about the feminist web based movements are recent. The global phenomenon of the #YesAllWomen and the personal testimonies of women victims of sexism. There were various investigations related to the wide circulation of women testimonies in the global Slut-walk movement : “Feminist scholarship has proved how girls and women are creating online cultures to be supportive for victims of sexual assault and violence, generating and circulating feminist discourses that counter the patriarchal ones and interrupt rape culture through a variety of creative interventions, such as the mobile phone app ‘Not Your Baby’ and the organizations that participate in the global Slut-walk” (Keller et al, 2016:3).

Most of this study for this research thesis is based on the analysis of digital contents and on a cultural and media studies theoretical framework. The analysis reveal that the coverage do far is a valuable source of knowledge about the feminist movement but it does not explicitly cover all the sociological questions that we raise. However, it is important to note that the huge wave of testimonials on the #me-too hashtag which took place in many countries. Specially the #metoo wave in India brought so many oppressed, sexually assaulted and harassed ahead in a safe space and gave them the courage to step forward and talk about it.

1.1 Background

The rise and advent of the World Wide Web in the 1990s offered the feminist movement a new way to express itself, in addition to using traditional mass media, and it was at this time that the foundations of “Digital Feminism”. And a new, fourth wave of feminism were laid. (Kelly 2005; Sánchez-Duarte and Fernández-Romero 2017).

Online spaces are majorly interpreted as s a potential Utopian post-feminist platform in which we share different narratives of oppressed women, queer and other unheard communities and further make radically different interpretations. The movement’s organization within the context of the Internet sphere implies to a particular kind of activism as well as new ideas and practices linked to core issues of gender, participation and collective identity and representation. As well as indicating the differences in collective identity between feminist activists offline and online. (Michael Ayers, 2003:87)

A huge amount of academic literature, reports and surveys suggest how women were creating powerful spaces for themselves online, helping to build the next frontier of the feminist movement. These forums began as simple websites, and developed into communities of hundreds of thousands of people who needed a platform to express themselves. They found it on the Internet. As years went by, social technologies began to evolve into a robust, diverse field of web-based platform and platforms. YouTube allowed for blogging, or “video blogging”; Twitter and Tumbler, or “micro-blogging,” allowed for easier and even more immediate sharing capabilities. Today, this evolution of online technologies has produced thousands of activists, writers, bloggers, and tweeters across the globe who live and breathe this movement, engaging their audience every

day in the name of equality. (Munro 2013; Lane 2015)

While it is difficult to predict and access the exact time period when online spaces began to be used for feminist activism in India and gained popularity as “safe spaces”, the use of Facebook and several other platforms as part of their feminist campaign can be seen as a turning point in recognizing the importance of social media as a critical tool for activism. Feminists do not just bring attention to a number of issues but also to transform digital technology itself into a feminist space. The presence of feminism on the Internet and social media platforms itself situates the social and political movement and the gradual paradigm shift in the rigid patriarchal structure. At the cusp of a very new cycle of interaction that promises greater opportunities in terms of creating awareness related to their issues and promoting a freer solidarity among women. After all, the interactive potential of the online sphere and social media context is much more favourable to women than the offline one in terms of the establishment of a greater action and a community network aiming to expand feminist activism. As Ting Liu (2008:56) very briefly explained, stronger cooperation among varied feminist groups plays a critical part in enhancing broader public involvement and the power of civil society in terms of women related issues.

1.1.1 What is Feminist Activism?

Feminist activists play a very crucial role in women rights organizations and movements worldwide by bringing up new issues that feminists face today. Showcasing their strength, creativity, struggles and adaptability which are vital to the sustainability of feminist organizations and movements.

Feminist activism comes to light because they face specific impediments such as limited access to financial support, lack of capacity-building opportunities. This creates a lack of visibility for female gender that makes more difficult their inclusion and effective participation within women’s rights movements. Feminist activism programs were created to make sure the voices of young women are heard properly. To ensure that all the young feminists have better access to funding, capacity building opportunities, proper recognition and equal representation in all the spheres of the society. It also strives for working for women’s rights of all ages on practical models and strategies for effective impact on the society as a whole. (Gill 2016; Stubbs & Richardson et

al. 2018)

1.1.2 The definition of the term “Digital”?

Due to the great amount of research that has been and continues to be conducted on digital technologies and practices, there is a wide variety of terms used to describe these activities; it is important to unpack digital terminology before considering digital feminist texts. The term “digital activism” provides an exhaustive framework for understanding practices that use digital network infrastructure. This terminology includes a broad range of digital tools, such as mobile phones and offline digital devices; terms such as “online activism” or “cyber activism” refer only to internet activism. Other terms such as “e-activism” stem from electronics and thus include irrelevant, outdated practices such as VHS tape recorders; digital identifies specific technologies. While certainly other terms may be relevant, digital activism best captures all instances of social and political campaigning practice that use digital network infrastructure. (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993:43)

Digital activism has proliferated in countless projects on a multitude of platforms and has been utilized as a tool for activism for years. While the context of activism has been altered by digital technologies such as social media. Digital media have not caused a complete paradigmatic shift in activism; rather, “as new media were incorporated into the ongoing practices of core groups of activists, they helped diffuse new dynamics of activism”. Digital technologies provide new discursive channels or tools for activists to create collectives and promote social change. Conducting collective action in digital spheres often involves less cost for quicker dissemination on a larger scale. (Cancian and Ross, 1981:151)

1.1.3 What Is Freedom of Expression Online?

The Freedom of expression online recognizes that the Internet holds massive potential for development. It not only provides an unprecedented volume of resources for information and knowledge that opens up new opportunities and challenges for expression and participation. The principle of freedom of expression and human rights must apply not only to traditional media but also to the Internet and all types of emerging media platforms, which will contribute to development, democracy and dialogue and should be accessible to all genders without any

discrimination.(Murthy 2010).

1.1.4 What is the role of technology?

The converging of innovation and technology with the actual world has altered the world in terms of all the aspects like financial, social and political sphere. In regards to, innovation as the language of computerized unrest gives a chance to all the policymakers to make a more comprehensive future. Electronic Devices and services used to make a blog and web-based media have prompted the democratization of the women activities by giving availability, access, empowering variety, and moving administration in their hands. On the web the cyber feminists utilize writing for a blog and web-based media as a means of political assembly and local community building. Social media is considered to be the quick spread of information and data across boundaries, and in this process of information transfer it also empowers transnational women's activist organizations and online groups and communities. Utilizing advanced service engines, women's activists have appropriated and adapted to the web culture with the utilizing it as an efficient method of communication. (Shulevitz and Traister 2014: 56)

In 2014, two US based women activists made the #FeministsAreUgly hashtag on Twitter to parody with the underlying thought that the women activists are ugly, and in an attempt to block the ladies from throwing light on narratives about social advantage and the prevailing standards of inequality. This tested the overall patriarchal practices on the web, just as the view of what is considered 'delightful' or 'attractive'. The talk around inappropriate behavior of women has likewise acquired force all throughout the planet, and can possibly uncover the misogyny wrapped under the blanket of male dominance. For example, the 'Me Too' movement against the sexual violating behavior, lead by American dissident Tarana Burke, acquired overall attention through Twitter in 2017. Several bloggers have called for "justice", spreading women's liberation in the free pathways of the internet. The 'When Women Refuse' blog, for example, had begun after a few ladies were executed in California, US, for dismissing the rules determined by the male of the society. In nations like Saudi Arabia, these miniature movements among the local women gathered global attention giving importance to issues concerned with sexuality and body violation, for example, those against unfair work regulations specifically targeted towards women. (Turley

and Fisher 2018:108)

Truly, women's liberation has been seen inside a confined Western focal point which is determined through the male lens. 'Third world ladies' are frequently seen as a 'manipulative and are assumed to have exploited the larger gathering of women across globe and are titled as 'misleading' in contrast to the free women activists. This is seen as an obstruction to a ideal society. Nonetheless, as more ladies of various ethnicities, races, classes and societies acquire technology and adapt to it, that leads to a bigger difference. The women activist extensively talk about the injustice to empower the voices of the individuals who have been avoided for decades now. This advances a postmodernist and post colonial viewpoint of women liberation, which recognizes variety in the development and acknowledges numerous certainties, jobs and real factors as a component of its core interest. It allows the minor gatherings of ladies for the fight women's liberation be independent of their own encounters and convictions. As indicated by an investigation by Pew Research Center, 39% of web clients take part in friendly and policy centered serious sensitive issues via web- based media and communities. Around 45% are between the ages of 18-29 years. Young cyber feminists likewise utilize the web in the best manner if given proper access and mainstream society associates that as a threat. The adolescent women are hence working for a cause of something great, by devouring this substance as well as making it. (Bear 2016:44)

Simultaneously, advanced women activist action can likewise be excluded or avoided completely since prevailing societies and male domination have a huge role in choosing the individuals who can be heard, included and found in the developmental process. Divergence in web access inside topographical areas and financial class structure is frequently a boundary in contacting the masses. The computerized space and the virtual sphere has likewise become a center for online badgering, tormenting and sexual misuse. It works with issues of sexism as well as brings about new ones that are complexly associated with the gender sensitive topics. The social inclination towards awareness penetrates global attention while creating these advances and progress in society as a whole. (Fotopoulou 2014:331)

1.1.5 Social Media Platforms and Feminist Movements

Social media networks and the interpersonal ties are important to all the social movements. They assist recruit members, sustain organizations, nourish participants' movement identities, and disseminate information. A lot of scholars and experts have pointed to the formative role of social media and other information and communication technologies in online and offline mobilization. Conclusions were drawn from this literature on social networks, online mobilization, and women's movements to look at the role of online feminist social networks in feminist mobilization. The advent of the advanced technology and the interactive platforms leads to the development of the Feminist interaction and nourish feminist networks, create online feminist communities, expanding recruitment bases for online and offline mobilization, and increase opportunities for online interaction with adversaries. The generational shifts within the feminism due to the various platforms has immensely increased, and therefore the broader relationship between networks and online and offline mobilization. Which leads to dissent of gender sensitive narratives to flow across the globe within no time. Dismantling the deep rooted patriarchal ideals, patterns, behaviour and privilege is not solely about being aware that it exists. It's about extending the awareness to the extremely marginalized groups, and using that privilege to influence the change that is much needed. Challenging inequality and injustice on social media starts the conversation about types of feminism which is the primary stage for winning the war of equality. (Larrondo 2019:115).

1.1.5.1 Facebook

Facebook is filled with feminists and several women passionately stating their opinions. The phenomenon is known as: Facebook Feminism. Facebook feminism represents what intersectional feminism really is and decreases the major obstacle of communication that the women's movements already faced in the past. Feminism seeks fair representation through obtaining the right of posting female centered articles on Facebook, Twitter, or simply declaring their solidarity. Today's technology driven society, has brought easy access of interaction around the globe by equipping them with Internet on their finger tips. The social media users can just go online, share an #IStandWithFemales article and use their freedom of speech in the easiest way

possible as away of a peaceful campaign or protest. There are several Facebook pages and several groups that bring aid and act as an ear to all those oppressed women locally as well as globally. (Bradley,2010:13)

1.1.5.2 Twitter

Feminists and ladies are using Twitter as a tool for activism in a variety of ways: for education, empowerment, and expression. for instance , women are using Twitter to teach other users and dispel myths around women's issues. Twitter , even in the past has been used as a forum to establish campaigns and projects that strive for social change.

Through various research studies, it was further established that these all these projects lead by women were working on a global scale as well as on a local scale, i.e. several women were uniting on common campaigns in large crowds even though they are situated in different countries. All the online twitter campaigns attracted a large amount of followers and that all kinds of online petitions regarding women's issues received many signatures. Feminist activism on Twitter is considered to be global in the sense of not being concentrated to one nation's geographical area. Twitter is also global in its nature by being on the World Wide Web. (Turley & Fisher, 2018:90)

1.1.5.3 Instagram

Instagram as the most emerging platforms of all, really helped all the women in starting a conversation in the comment sections and through posts and talk about how harshly Indian women are being judged and are being majorly dominated by the males of the society even on virtual spheres. Instagram became not only the voice of a rape survivor, or a virgin and a victim of abuse, it revealed the messy humanity behind these random labels that the society puts on women.

Instagram equips all the women to have healthy discussion in a safe space. The popular understanding of feminism in India gained an immense pace after the arrival of Instagram. It tackled issues like abuse to all the way to body-shaming. The Instagram also majorly highlighted the sexism within the industry, also showcasing the unequal pay among the males and the females in various industries and sectors. Instagram has been on the Feminist narratives and given voiceless women the kind of support they always needed. It has successfully revealed the ugly side of a patriarchal society and taken forward the word of equality among all the genders. (Dixon,

2016:78)

1.2 Conclusion

To conclude, Digital feminism is vital for India and the Global community is because it is an efficient tool for creating social movements also as social change. Furthermore, it creates an area and leads discussions and narratives during which women are ready to share their ideas, opinions, experiences and stories without being silenced or being oppressed by others. However, it's important that through the work of digital feminism, people that aren't connected to the web world thanks to political, social or financial reasons aren't being forgotten. Moreover, digital feminism and activation is best when it encompasses an inter sectional approach, recognizing all the complexity of deep rooted social problems of racism, classism, homophobia, trans gender phobia, sexuality, ableism, and more. Additionally , the knowledge production that follows digital feminist work frame is astonishing, because the ideas and knowledge of thousands of individuals are often shared with an easy click of a button. While digital feminism may be a fairly new addition to feminist work, it's clear that its contributions to feminist work has been great.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, to understand the numerous theories and ideas of the feminist activist movements across the digital and virtual sphere, it is important to study various research papers, journals, featured articles, research papers. Through analysis of all these papers and study material, a clear and better understanding about the narrative and other aspects of the Digital Feminism is derived.

2.1 Brophy (2010:103), in her research article, “Developing a corporeal cyberfeminism: beyond cyberutopia” claims that acknowledging liminality “is important to feminist scholars in terms of recognizing the constant experience of the in between, of torsion and of crossing thresholds”. Just as Butler puts forth the idea that all gender is performative, Brophy claims that “the evident and experienced liminality of cyberspace recognizes that all experiences cross thresholds, and limiting liberation to liminal spaces like the Internet thus unnecessarily delimits the possibilities of transformation in other “real spaces”. Put more simply, all online experience crosses thresholds into the “real spaces,” so to argue that liberation efforts taking place online do not constitute action or make real life change is inaccurate and unnecessary. All acts cross thresholds, in this case the threshold between the virtual and the real.

2.2 Donna Haraway (1991:32), in her classic research article “A Cyborg Manifesto”, discusses the politics of how we name identity, and that the difficulty of naming our feminism stems from the fact that identities are “contradictory, partial, and strategic” . In other words, there is nothing essential or defining about any single adjective with which we might describe feminism, as they all capture only a partial and strategic glimpse of a larger picture.

2.3 Bradley (2003:31), in his research paper “Feminist Anthropology”, describes the meaning

of the virtual sphere as “almost” or “in essence”. He also described virtual spaces as a sense of having great potential and having possibility for a better and a progressive society, where reality has more strict delineations. By definition, there was some gap between the virtual and the actual, which is sometimes also called the real. This gap “is critical: were it to be filled in, there would be no virtual worlds, and in a sense no actual world either. This is ultimately a reconfiguration of the binaries between nature and culture, and its boundary-marker is the distinction between ‘online’ and ‘offline.’

2.4 Baer (2016:19), in his research article “Digital feminism are in the age of neoliberal”, talks about all the changes taking place in women’s activism and how the third wave feminism is no longer linked to strong theoretical frameworks, except in the circle of feminist scholars and among activists who fight for gender identity issues. It has emancipated from Marxism and leftist theories and it is less revolutionary than in the past for becoming more pragmatic. Only a few collectives, like The Impertinent and Solitary Women, still call for a global social change. The embrace of popular culture suggests a more conventional form of feminism that can appear less critical of the establishment than the activism of past generations. Icons in the past were writers, philosophers, scholars; today icons are pop-media stars who defend women’s rights with simple messages.

2.5 Couldry and Van Dijck (2015:3), In their research paper on “Digital feminism: Questioning the renewal of activism”, talks about the Contemporary feminism as being often criticized for being mainly focused on visibility and connectivity which, as such, cannot lead to much social change. In fact, it was explained how the digital activism is not only expressive but becoming a main stream for major protests and campaigns. The article questions the underlying and deeper social and political factors explaining the revival of feminism in the virtual sphere, and analyzes how feminists and oppressed women communities used digital media to promote their cause. It presents the results of a two year research project on feminist activism in India; however, many results had a broader implication for the evolution of feminism in India. This article brought the high visibility of the digital feminism that had led to the rise of a virulent cyber sexism. Finally, by end of the research paper, questions remain the same about the empowerment of feminists at a time when conservative forces are re emerging in the Indian society and blocking the oppressed

female voices on all the virtual spaces.

2.6 Hanrath and Leggewie (2013:33), in their book about “The Evolution of the Internet”, defines the role and the power of Internet as a whole. Further explaining the concept they mention that “Unlike the normal mass communications, with newspapers and television as lead media, the utilization of the Internet via computers and mobile phones facilitates individualized mass communication, allowing user-generated content to be shared with a virtual community. during this way, users can bypass governments and therefore the mainstream media, in their established roles as conceptual, commercial and organizational gate keepers and agenda-setters, and use the planet Wide Web to transcend the local and, indeed, the national public spheres”

2.7 Van Dijck (2013:36), In his research work on “Advancing Feminist Movements” , discusses how the online mode of protest is a way to rally ordinary followers and to rely on user agency. He explained how the Digital media was not only social technical devices requiring to obey protocols, instructions, rules, they are also “techno-cultural constructs.” they're also “techno cultural constructs.” this text also analyses the social imaginary of ‘networked feminist community’ as an ideological construct of legitimate political engagement, drawing on ethnographic study conducted with Global women’s organizations. He discussed what percentage women’s groups, their desire to attach echoes libertarian visions of Web 2.0 as an ‘open’ and ‘shared’ virtual space, and it's encouraged by widely circulating governmental narratives of digital inclusion. within the context of public services becoming digital by default, and severe funding cuts to volunteer organizations within the UK , feminist organizations are invited to revise the allocation of resources, so as to best accommodate the fixing of digital platforms, and at an equivalent time, to take care of their political and social aims. it's argued that there are tensions between the imaginary of a ‘digital sisterhood’ and therefore the material realities of women’s organizations: age, lack of resources and media literacy were found to be the three most vital factors that modulate participation, and in many cases become new sorts of exclusions of access to publicity and recognition. The article also offered a deep rooted understanding of networked media and activism for women’s social justice.

2.8 Newsom & Lengel (2011: 31), In their book “The Arab Spring Feminist Movements”,

discusses how during the Arab Spring the world noticed how the social media was being used for a cause for change. They further explained that Twitter and Facebook played a crucial role in allowing female protesters and activists to arrange meet-ups via social networking site and online communities, or to broadcast information, videos and images. In Western media and policy forums, discussions of gender in the Arab Spring generally highlight what is considered to be a paradox: women have participated in large numbers in the uprisings across the Middle East but they face a rollback in their rights and under-representation in emerging political institutions. There are two intersecting discourses that construct this so-called paradox. Feminist framework, based on an idealized representation of the development of European women's movements, whereby women's public mobilization led directly to advancements in women's rights and representation. The book also talked how the Arab women were clear victims of eternal Arab-Islamic patriarchy.

2.9 Escobar (1999:5), in his research paper "Feminism and Revolution: Looking Back, Looking Ahead", gives examples of the implementation Global or Transnational Feminism. Also discusses about feminists creating a 'virtual, imaginative, transnational community of diverse social movements', through the use of the internet, particularly the social networking websites such as Twitter. The aim of creating this virtual communities is to create a utopia where global unification is more important than national identity. The views of the author resonates with the comparison between "Indian patriarchal culture" and "Western patriarchal cultures" by Humberto Maturana, a psychologist. The author also presents the arguments put ahead by the feminist writers that adopted an ontological conception, within an overall perspective they call "the biology of a patriarchal society". He further explains, "In a patriarchal culture both women and men are patriarchal, and the oppressed women contribute to the dominance of patriarchy as they are being unaware of the injustice happening in their every day life The author defines the Patriarchal culture as characterized by actions and emotions that value competition, hierarchies, power, growth, appropriation, procreation, the domination of the others, violence, and war, combined with the rational justification of it beat the name of truth. By end of the research paper, the author discusses the need of feminist voice and how it can be the only way towards

eradicating patriarchal dominance and instilling a safer and a better place for all the genders in our society.

2.10 Belleau (2007:42), in his research study on “Inter-sectional Feminism”, explores the various dimensions of the Inter-sectional feminism has been an area of discussions that believes that women should be recognized and influenced not only by their mere gender but also by the other factors such as their race, physical abilities, and sexuality. If one ignores these differences among various group of women, this tends to cause tension within communities, so according to Inter-sectional Feminists one must accept, understand and acknowledge the oppression that other women from different groups face. Belleau also argues that the availability for women to cooperate using inter sectionalism opens up endless ways for different groups of feminists to unite together, therefore including feminists who might otherwise be isolated.

2.11 Lasora, Lewis & Holton (2011:91), In their research article “Facebook and MySpace”, discusses the scenario of 2006 when the social networking site Twitter emerged. Twitter took social networking platform to an entire new level. Whereas previous social media sites and platforms such as Facebook and MySpace worked merely on a ‘friends’ basis (the two users involved would agree to link accounts on the site which allows both users mutual access to each others information which is displayed on their profile page), Twitter worked on a ‘followers’ basis where anyone can see, access or search any data that had been published on the site. The author also believes the arrival of ‘Twitter’ to be the ultimate milestone for the masses as it brought an easy access for people to be heard regardless of their gender, class, creed, race, age, religion etc.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Method

This research methodology includes Qualitative method of content analysis of a number of feminist movements in on-line forums over the decade in India and other western countries. Various matter analysis has been engaged like, studies, books, research papers, articles, films etc. pertaining the same. Along with the study and analysis of various social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram that have been used as a tool to spread the discourse of all the major Feminist movements.

3.2 Introduction

This research methodology of this thesis intends to grasp how the feminist activists interact with social media as an area of exchange in narratives, I relied on in-depth, and structured study of various Feminist online groups and organizations that work towards the same cause.

The main characteristics of qualitative research lays on the respect of the natural setting in which data are collected. The researchers use direct data collection without aiming to change the settings in which data is collected, and get to experience concrete interaction with the participants of the study. Qualitative studies are looking to analyze the information and interpret the information given by experts is the main tool that researchers can use to address their research. For the sake of this research, qualitative methods, with a platform of content to study, will be implemented to answer part of the Research Question and one of the Sub questions. In particular, through this method, it will be addressed the “nature” aspect of the social media campaigns based on women empowerment, trying to understand the driving forces behind the decisions of activists that undertook this path.

3.3 Significance

It's extremely important to study how the technology and the growing digital platforms have created enough space for one gender which has always been considered as inferior and how it has made people more progressive and created enough awareness towards sensitive issues related to a gender.

The Internet holds a great promise as it enables democratizing the social, economic, cultural and political rights. The aim is to envision a medium as 'feminist internet'. How would it be any different from the Internet of today? The feminist activation on digital platforms is important to unsettle the idea of the Internet and how the majority perceive it. It attempts to unpack the masculine domination while accessing the Internet in the hands of the female and how can we strive towards making it is a safe space. The social, cultural, economic, political, and geographic locations differs one's experience in cyberspace thus a greater sense of awareness about gender equality is much needed. The thesis aims to understand the potential of Internet in the context of some of the major current debates concerning to the divides among different genders in access to information etc. Its important to have an overview of the major findings from existing research on the social implications of the Internet, from a feminist framework, and at each point, relates these findings to similar debates in 'offline' spaces.

3.4 Objectives

3.4.1 General Objective

3.4.1.1 To study the scenario related to such movements before the digital revolution

3.4.1.2 To study the scenario after the digital revolution.

3.4.1.3 To study the impact of technology on the issues related to feminism.

3.4.1.4 To find the amount of difference digital platforms have made to change the people's mentality regarding such gender issues.

3.4.1.5 To site examples related to the same, from Past as well as the future.

3.5 Hypothesis

The advent of the advanced technology, internet, and the arrival of the digital sphere gave voice to the feminist movement in India.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTENT ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the data analysis of various local, national and international campaigns and protests lead by the feminists to present a comparative study of the Indian campaigns and the Global campaigns. The following campaigns held on various social media platforms covering the time span of early 2000 to late 2021.

4.2 Social Media Campaigns as Activism

There exist different types of social media campaigns for example photo campaigns, blog entries, design campaigns, video campaigns, mixed media campaigns and text campaigns including, for example, hashtag movements. Social media campaigns don't only relate to traditional commercial marketing, but also to a more social marketing, dedicated to support causes and initiatives without always looking for monetary revenues. Many non profit organizations that use social media campaigns as a voice to reach masses, had great success in their intents. Epic Change for example, raised \$11.000 in just 48 hours through Twitter, with the campaign called "Tweets-giving" that helped building Classrooms in schools of Tanzania. Greenpeace created the "Great Whale Trail" campaign, that encouraged followers to start personal fund raising pages, supporting whale tracking through GPS systems during their migration through dangerous waters. Thanks to this initiative, Greenpeace was able to fund raise over \$120.000. Social media campaigns also expose social issues and help getting people involved in supporting common causes by spreading awareness. (Dixon, 2014:214)

4.3 #TrendingFeminism

In April 2012, UK based activist Laura Bates created the Everyday Sexism Project on Twitter so as to document everyday experiences of sexism perpetrated against women. She sought

to make an easy digital space that might leave women to share their experiences; yet within a year, Bates received over 25,000 entries from 15 countries. Responses include accounts of sexual abuse, sexist jokes, victim blaming, and workplace sexism. While the tone of every message ranges from angry to ashamed, most connote a way of injustice and therefore the desire to supply a feminist response, especially to those that perceive women as having already achieved equality (Riera, 2015:21)

4.4 The Pink Chaddi Campaign

The Pink Chaddi campaign started in 2009, as a peaceful protest against the right wing Hindu group Sri Ram Sene's attack on women during a pub in Mangalore. The campaign was launched by a gaggle led by women who called themselves "Consortium of Pub going, Loose, and Forward Women." A Facebook group was also launched, which had almost reached the amount of 30,000 members within every week. The members of the group then coordinated to circulate 3000 pink panties to the top of Sri Ram Sene. The campaign became extremely popular not just for its unconventional and artistic mode of protest that challenged traditional notions of activism but also for the way it effectively used social media to garner wide span of attention to its cause. Since then, digital technology has been explored and appreciated in various ways by Indian feminists not just to bring attention to variety of critical issues but also to rework digital technology itself into a safer feminist space. (Richardson, 2018:19)

4.5 Jyoti Pandey Rape Outrage

People across the world watched as thousands walking down the streets in New Delhi in December 2012 due to the gang rape of twenty three year old physiotherapy student Jyoti Pandey. While similar protests were held in other major metropolitan cities across the country and therefore the online outrage of individuals was to such an extent that the govt imposed a curfew and sanctioned the utilization of force by its riot police. Domestic as well as international media coverage along all the social media platforms of those events helped fuel public outrage. The protesters made varied and lengthy demands for improving public safety for ladies, including calls to form public transportation safe; to encourage the police to be more responsive; to reform the judicial process, including reform to the Indian Evidence Act,

the legal code , and therefore the sentencing standards; and to generally provide for greater dignity, autonomy, and rights for ladies . As a results of the general public outcry, a three-member committee chaired by jurist judge J. S. Verma was convened to recommend changes to the legal code on sexual violence. supported the committee's recommendations, the government passed the legal code Amendment Act (2013), which addresses a series of concerns expressed by various women's groups, but omits the decriminalization of assault perpetrated by spouses or the soldiers. (Chatterjee, 2015:07)

4.6 #Metoo Campaign

When the #Metoo campaign spread globally, women all round the world and in India used social media to form visible that that they had been harassed, sexually and otherwise. The campaign made evident what everyone knew but had almost witnessed the size of. Moreover, the #metoo campaign sent vibrations through India's feminist movements in unprecedented and dramatic ways, questioning key ideas of the movement, and means of mobilization. Solidarity and sense of unity were at stake. #MeToo on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and more. This entire movement started for all the survivors of harassment , sexual abuse , and sexual bullying to bond and share their stories, It became a worldwide movement that has sparked significant changes, both social and legal.

The phrase #MeToo was first coined in the year 2006 by Tarana Burke, who was an advocate for ladies in NY . Burke firmly wanted to empower women who had endured sexual violence by letting them know that they weren't alone and that other women had suffered an equivalent experience that they had . Then, in 2017, the phrase was reintroduced by actress Alyssa Milano as to encourage all the women and men to come forward and share their stories as a part of an anti-sexual harassment movement. The results of the revived movement have since been astounding, with people sharing their stories amid the hashtag #MeToo across many various social media platforms. And within the wake of those disclosures, a number of the nation's most powerful people in entertainment, sports, and politics are exposed for sexually harassing or assaulting others. Milano's decision to reintroduce the phrase was prompted by a replacement York Times article during which Harvey Weinstein was accused of harassment . At the time, Milano was

unaware of the origin of the phrase, and commenced encouraging survivors to use the hashtag #MeToo on social media to make awareness for the difficulty and build a way of community and support among survivors. (McDuffie and Ames 2021).

Initially, Ashley Judd and Rose McGowan were the foremost vocal about Weinstein's actions. Plenty others felt empowered by both the movement and therefore the fearlessness of Judd and McGowan, began to share their stories also . Within the meantime, Milano had no idea how quickly one small idea would catch on, prompting the phrase to be used quite 12 million times over subsequent few weeks. For people that worked with survivors of sexual abuse and harassment on a day to day , the response was beyond what they might comprehend. Finally, the difficulty that they had been working tirelessly to deal with was gaining some traction and garnering national attention. The local grassroots effort spearheaded by Burke had now expanded to succeed in a community of survivors from all walks of life. (Ghadery, 2019:11)

4.7 #IWillGoOut Campaign

Over New Year's Eve in 2016, a slew of sexual assault cases against women came to light in India's tech hub of Bengaluru. Four years prior, against the backdrop of a violent rape in the nation's capital of Delhi, prominent feminists and activists took to the streets as part of mass public protests calling for legal protections for women in India. The response to the New Year's Eve allegations, however, differed in two ways. The first was the conspicuous role social media played for the first time in the feminist movement in India. The second was the leadership provided by young feminists in the country. A coalition of various feminist organizations and individuals banded together to form a collective under the hashtag #IWillGoOut. This article discusses feminist activism over a period of two weeks at the start of 2017, when the #IWillGoOut collective rapidly mobilized widespread public support calling for the safety of women and minorities in public spaces in India. The campaign organized and led marches and events in over 30 towns and cities of India with no formal fund raising effort. I draw on my personal experience of organizing the campaign to share insights into its success in transforming online support to offline action using social media. This experience provides a useful example that can be used in other social justice movements in the Indian subcontinent.

4.8 #YesAllWomen Campaign

In the wake of the Elliot Rodger shooting frenzy, numerous ladies have gone to Twitter to share their encounters of provocation, dread and rape under the hashtag #YesAllWomen. Rodger's planned slaughtering binge in Isla Vista, California, killed seven individuals incorporating his own with a few more harmed. He murdered two ladies outside a sorority house, however as indicated by Rodger himself he had intended to "butcher" a few more. Rodger's YouTube recordings and 147 page "pronouncement" make a representation of a forlorn misanthrope who felt qualified for the considerations of ladies for no other explanation than his own apparent insight and status.

Donna Hawkins In her survey of "#YesAllWomen", found that the hashtag #YesAllWomen was conceived and turned into the mark under which ladies imparted their encounters to male privilege. As per Hashtags.org, #YesAllWomen which didn't exist before May 24 has been joined to 1.2 million tweets, topping at 61,500 tweets on May 25. (Topsy stakes the quantity of tweets at a little more than 1 million.) Twitter created an animated heat map of the #YesAllWomen hashtag, showing how it progressed since its genesis on May 24 and spread throughout the weekend. The hashtag had worldwide reach, with most of the tweets concentrated in the U.S. and U.K., but saw activity in many other countries, including Pakistan, Indonesia and Qatar. (Donna Hawkins, 2016 :51)

4.9 The Arab Spring

Social media and smart phones briefly gave youthful Arab Spring Female protesters a technological edge that helped topple ageing dictatorships a decade ago as their revolutionary spirit went viral. Unfortunately for the pro-democracy movements, autocratic states have since trapped within the digital race , adding cyber surveillance, online censorship and troll armies to their arsenals. While the so-called Arab Spring offered a quick glimmer of hope for several , it ended with even more repressive regimes in most countries and devastating, ongoing wars in Syria, Libya and Yemen.

Women played a leading role within the Arab Spring, but its impact on women and their rights is unclear. The Arab Spring was a series of demonstrations, protests, and civil wars against authoritarian regimes that started in Tunisia and spread to much of the Arab world. The

leaders of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen were overthrown. Bahrain has experienced sustained civil disorder, and therefore the protests in Syria became a war. Other Arab countries experienced protests also .

At this point , women's political participation was expanding greatly compared to before. They were participating in anti-government demonstrations and therefore the protection of their rights for education by establishing a better education system. Egyptian women have had a history of being active members of trade unions, organizations, informal networks, and online communities. albeit there are only a couple of women in politics in Egypt, those involved have advanced activism. Women's involvement within the Arab Spring went beyond direct participation within the protests to incorporate cyber activism. Social media has enabled women to be ready to contribute to demonstrations as organizers, journalists, and political activists. Arab women played a key role in changing the views of the many. They were important revolutionists during the Arab Spring, and lots of activists hoped the Spring would boost women's rights, but its impact has not matched expectations. Women face discrimination within the Arab world and since expanding their roles and participation wasn't a priority for other revolutionary forces, they ended up sacrificing tons with no gain within the end. Islamist parties have risen to power in states that experienced changes of state , and a few view their power as a serious threat to women's status. (Quan-Haase et al., 2021:53)

4.10#WhyLoiter Campaign

The “Why Loiter” movement all started with a book of an equivalent name published a couple of years ago and later on became a popular hashtag “#WhyLoiter” and grabbed a lot of attention. The complex societal restrictions on women publicly space in India, and that they found the pressure on women to remain “safe” reception isn't what it seems, here or in most countries. In this campaign the streets of Mumbai which are mostly crammed with men and ladies going about their day working, shopping, exercising and socializing. But by night, the town is dominated by men. Through this campaign, the females gathered through online groups on twitter and organized a march at night for a month to keep the streets safer streets. The results of an area culture that creates streets feel unwelcoming to women in the dark, urging them to stay in

their homes at late hours has prompted a mini movement. It's called #WhyLoiter. This campaign brought a lot of awareness regarding women's safety in India and brought a good amount of change in the states like Delhi where the rape statistics are sky scraping. (McDuffie and Ames 2021)

4.11 #PrettyPeriod Campaign

In 2013, Yaba Blay noticed that pictures of Lupita Nyong's were flooding her Facebook feed. #PrettyPeriod got extremely popular by being known " as the hashtag that celebrates women". Blay being the victim of harassment for being a black skinned woman, took to the web to start out #PrettyPeriod, a visible celebration of black women's everyday beauty. For everyone involved in the campaign, the hashtag was very personal and sensitive. Blay received a lot of community support and a lot of women spoke about similar encounters that they faced in their lives by using the same hashtag.

4.12 #Challenge Accepted Campaign

In 2020, during the month of July many Instagram feeds were overrun with black and white images of women across India, both famous and common women were fiercely involved in this campaign. These photographs were posted and filtered by black and white theme, taken from flattering angles and accompanied by benign captions about "supporting women."

The premise of the "challenge accepted" trend through similar pictures was to promote female empowerment, and than continuing the chain by nominating friends to take part in the campaign is a way for women to support each other. Approximately more than 3 million photos were uploaded with the #ChallengeAccepted hashtag. The trend of pacing along with usage of the hashtag on Instagram doubling everyday reveals that this entire campaign took forward the narrative of strength and support for the entire women's community.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study was to explore how efficiently all the feminists interact with the social media and sphere other on line communities and use it as a tool for creating gender equality awareness. The aim of this study was also to additionally explore the potential of virtual in context with the Indian feminism and the feminism operating at the international level. Digital technology therefore contributes for the major development of feminist public spheres, where the marginalized communities and people are being curbed by the Patriarchy. Digital technology has additionally enabled the girls and the women to make networks of commonality and be a part of conscious raising teams and organizations by affording them the choice of obscurity. The feminist narratives additionally demonstrate that the intensity of violence, struggle and the trauma of falling victim to patriarchal societies. The ‘real’ Definitions of feminist policy should be broadened to incorporate interventions that request to interrogate and redefine the connection between gender and technology.

Feminist infrastructure is evidently a vast ecosystem and it firmly supports the sustainability and the advancement of all feminist struggles. The ways in which the society consumes and interpret the information and communication technologies are irretrievably shaped by the only lens of patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism. Feminist narratives along with the technology exposes the sexism and hypocrisy of the society. The fantasy that technology was invented by white men in basements, laboratories, or military bunkers, as an example , has also been sustained by the measure of the contributions of women and the other oppressed communities that do not get enough representation. Technological companies further exploited women because the main source of cheap and slave labor altogether sectors, encompassing material extraction, device recycling, internal control , consumer service, and software development.

Feminist theories and advances of technology should go hand in hand. Constant Acceptance towards the growing online communities striving towards the feminist equality and representation would be desirable and liberating. Feminist digital revolution and technologies redefine the global media and therefore the internet. They hack the patriarchal big technical monopolies and the male dominance that enable surveillance capitalism and fuel gender-based violence and inequality in the society. The advent of easy internet and all the social media platforms has surely permitted the women regain control and autonomy over our narratives and collective memories and movements concentrated towards women empowerment.

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