CHAPTER-I

Cyberfeminism: Definition, History, Feature

Cyber: a platform, where one can roam around the world, sitting under one roof and can access numberless information, exchange ideas, views, opinions, entertainment, shopping, travelling, images etc. anything can be distributed through electronic means.

1. *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines cyber as: "connected with electronic communication, networks, especially the internet" (380).

2. *Collins English Dictionary* defines cyber as: 'Combining form indicating computers: cyberspace" (124).

   In short, anything which connect, informs, entertained exchange, through internet or computer come under the category of cyberspace.

Feminism: concerned to women, where they want equality with men in social, political, economic in every sphere of life. And internet becomes such as the medium where they can get uniformity according to their choice and interest. Thus internet or cyber space can provide them freedom of expression, expression of their need and benefits.

Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary defines feminism: "the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim". (565).

Collins English Dictionary defines feminism as "a doctrines or movement that advocates equal rights for women"(186).

Vangie Beal, managing editor of Webopedia.com and author stated in one of her article: What is cyber? "Cyber as a prefix used in a growing number of terms to describe new thing that are being made possible by spread of computers. Cyber phobia, for example, is an irrational fear of computers, cyberpunks is a genre of science fiction that draws heavily on computer science ideas. Cyberspace is the nonphysical terrain created by computer systems. Anything related to the internet also falls under the cyber category" (*webopeidia.com* n.p.).

The term cyberfeminism was coined in 1994 by Sadie Plant, director of the cybernetic culture Research unit at the university of Warwick in Britain. Sadie Plant in her "Zero and One" associates cyberfeminism with a relation between women and technology which she describes as intimate and subversive. "Her use of the term "Weaving" recalls the history of women's labour in which women stayed at home while men played the roles of hunters. Plant believes that in the new technologies men will lose everything their domination and power. Plant symbolically renders Zero as females and One as Phallic and "Male" predicting that the digital future is feminine, distributed a nonlinear world in which "Zeroes" are displacing the Phallic order of One" (Qtd Vesna Dragojlo n.p.).

As stated above, earlier women were dependent on men for major or minor needs concerning to them either for the company of male member of family or getting things by men. Women were not supposed to go out in the darkness if brother, father or husband not let them to go out or accompanying them. But this new technology digitalized to women and they are now free to do any work freely and independently. Shopping groceries, fruits from Naturebasket.com to paying any type of bill through Paytm.com.

New technologies in globalized world compressing each and every information on single screen and serving to various types of users on their finger tip. Now women are changing their lifestyle drastically whether it is cooking, net banking, fashion, tour and travelling, chatting, making communities of their own, or even if it is knitting, stitching, articulating on public platform, where twitter play vital role and on other social media, women surpassing everything and anywhere.

Cyberspace that mean use of internet and when we talk about feminism it is more actualy women who are exploiting cyber space. It cultivates women in terms of critiquing. Housewife, professionals, college goers from how to cook food and how to serve it till how to drive vehicle and how to handle it. Inside the four wall without any help or assistance of male member of family, independently, browsing, searching, downloading apps, shopping through flipkart, amazon etc. facilitating their life on grand scale.

"Internet usage has the potential to strengthen close personal relationship with offline individual" (Bargh & Mckenna, 2004). By saying this, Bargh and Mckenna want to affirm that no problems, if near and dear ones are living in abroad. Abroad becomes shadow lines and obscure because digital space crossing the bridge of long distance. For mother, wife, friends, sister, infact for everyone using viber, skype, WhatsApp chatting and communicating with them makes life easier and comfortable. The things which they could not share face to face easily, sharing through computer mediated talk easily.

As Ravishankar Prasad Communications and Technology Union minister, shared one of his experience in a programme called "EkNaiSubah" a – celebration on two years of P.M. Modi Govt. on National TV Channel he narrated his experience as walking through a village he saw women were learning computer and tips of internet on asking the reason of it one of a lady said.

"My son living in Dubai, working as a plumber there, through skype, I can see, I can talk to them easily" (*Ek Nai Subah*, DD1,28 May 2016).

This proof that women living in village areas too if get opportunities and facilities of electricity and net connection can also move on same path and can experience the relevance of computer, internet world. Skype and viber internet based audio, video communication talks and open access programmes give a sense of connection crossing the geographical gap provide a sense of belongingness, resulting in greater sense of community.

And thus Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision and dream of Digital India will be soon accomplish as he says that every citizen should have internet connection with them and so women are not aloof of this vision.

Thus drawing from Plant's theory and other cyber feminism thinkers such as the art collective VNS matrix in 1992 from Australia. These two parties from two different platforms one cultural theorist from Great Britain and other art collective from Australia began to use the term at around the same time. "They are four-person collective called VNS matrix in Adelaide Australia, wrote the cyber feminist manifesto and used the term to label their radical feminist acts, to insert women, bodily fluids and political consciousness into electronic spaces" (*Wikipedia*, 25 April, 2016). This study seeks to examine gender relationship in cyber-space, collaboration with women and technology, relationship between woman and technology and fluidity of relation. Also, the study proposes to look into its positive and negative aspects with analysis of social-cultural economic, psychological reason and its effect on their life.

Quoting VNS Matrix Vesna Dragojlov says, the work at VNS Matrix was in different artisan media, but their topics were often about feminism and cultural theories. Their investigation

covered such as areas as male domination and control in new technologies, the construction of new social space and issues of identity in cyber space. VNS Matrix referred to themselves as "Geekgirls". Anarchic, ironic, perverse and subversive, their goal was to "infect" certain overarching patriarchal notions of narrative and structure through the use of viral symbology and the belief that "women who hijack the tools of domination and control introduce a rupture into highly systematized culture by infecting the machines with radical though, diverting them from their inherent purpose of linear top down mastery" (qtd Vesna Dragojlov).

Further, Vesna Dragojlov mentions that as a testimony of VNS Matrix dynamic approach to the dominance of men in technologies, VNS Matrix created a billboard poster announcing their Cyber feminists manifesto for the Twenty First Century. The center piece of the post occupies three floating, dreamlike, vaguely female figures mutating out of a marine like fossil base, their arms raised in an expression of power.

The figures are both masculine and feminine, products of air, sky, earth. The celestial globe that they hold has the words of the manifesto inscribed in it: "We are the virus of the new world disorder rupturing the symbolic from within"(1991,VNS Matrix).The poster announces a new era of cyber feminist art one that comments ironically on the masculine fantasies of domination.

This research will study the factors that enable women into digital space online job, online education, online entrepreneurship all changing perception and attitude of women for making them more independent and self-confident. Earlier it was believed that technology was male controlled business but now it become female controlled business too.

 Bapsi Sidhwa says:

"Women thrive in digital space. I am a novelist play writer and activist. I am on Facebook, twitter, and a blogger, and everything I write reflects my view as a woman. I am interested in seeing women advance in all spheres and   activities. Digital space offers the unique opportunities."(Sidhwa,Bapsi."Opinion on Cyberfeminism." *Facebook*. Devpriya Tripathi, 19 Mar. 2016.   Web. 19 Mar. 2016).

"Women don't want welfare and charity but they want right. They are moving towards decision making process for getting their main purpose of life" (Margaret Alva, "*Khash khabrein Sarokar*, Rajyasabha T.V.,29 May,2016).

In this regards, we cannot forget the role of Twitter where women are getting voice and right to speak, whenever any sexist opinion express by any politician or celebrity they criticized and quickly tweet to them thus they participate in democracy. This is a democratic platform where anyone can write. Without such platform common feminist cannot get opportunities to raise their voice publically.

Cultural and socially developed still living the life of "Other", still underpin male domination. Internet erases gender inequality and deplorable conditions of women that limits the active participation of them in social, political and economical life.

In this approach Shakira Hussein, an Australian National University sociology scholar researching Islam, in cyber space says, "As Online activities become more widely known and accepted some secluded Muslim women may wind up staying home even more than they ordinarily would. For these woman, Hussein says, the internet could become a "substitute for physical mobility, a way to enforced segregation" (Sofia Macfarland n.p.).

For many Muslims in chat rooms, however a common theme is happiness, not the isolation that living in Purdah brings. Sister Noor, a devout Muslim in Scotland who takes vitamin supplements because she gets natural sunlight only rarely, says on a site called living in Purdah, "since going online, I have written to many sisters and have made sine wonderful friends – but I would like to stress that living in Purdah was all that I wanted before I got my computer." (Macfarland,Sofia."Internet can open and close doors for Muslim women living in seclusion" *Indian Express 9 April 2001:* n.p. print). Thus they feel at ease and their privacy can be protected.

Relevance of cyber feminism or cyber space is growing day by day, using digitalised space women keep their passion alive and achieving what they believed in. The aim of it is to articulate how the capacity of social dimension can be further developed and contribute to advancing gender integration. Creating communities online, sharing, ideas, images, information online, studying about health, issues, diet personal hygiene care, treatment and even about menstruation and information related to it. Each and every minutes details which relates them personally and socially. Fulfill basic needs of women.

As Becker (2000) clearly indicates that "technology is clearly becoming a valuable and well-functioning instructional tool" ("Findings from the Teaching, learning and computing Survey." 29).

It helps mothers for assisting their children's holiday projects and school goers too. Needs any images, pictures and information related to it or any subject i.e. – history, geography, architect, science, home science, fashion, design google image and search engines are available anytime as a knowledge Bank. These things were not so easy earlier searching shop to shop, market to market, cutting pasting from old books into file and folder such activities eat away their time and exhausted

life. YouTube videos giving them varieties of learning i.e. Dance steps, clear idea of any notation and rhythm for music, video calling finding old friend maintaining relation even for away through Facebook, WhatsApp these techno-feminist activities becomes information – circulating hubs too.

These mind machine fusion of web creates web of all types of possibilities. Be relax, entertained, happiness, passing time, getting up to date news of the world at the time of globalization and digital India what else need. So these can be the factors which inculcates interest in women for digitally empower. And these functions also influencing the technology adoption process in them.

Progression of social networking technologies has been met with considerable interest by women to take advantage of it, energy of their interactive, supportive and learning qualities.

It is handy and portable too "The internet cannot be included in the same category as a book or pamphlet or other physical representation. It is a combination of electronic impulses that (when translated through a series of sophisticated electronic structures), could be viewed on a screen (Bakshi,P.M."Women and the internet" *News Time*, 10 January 2000: n.p. print). So as to more easy in use that even working in the kitchen women can flavoured its varieties.

Affirming the use and importance of cyber space, Amita Kapoor, Co-ordinator of Cisco says "even now, we face the mentality that says too much money should not be spent on women's education and that she shouldn't be allowed to go out of the house for long hours.' Computer networking for "Girls have a definite advantage," says Kapoor. They obtain graduation and also get a networking, certificate, so they can get into companies like HC, Hughes, Sapient and Patni computers. They start at salaries of Rs. 12,000 – 15,000 and in six months they earn more than

us." And thus rids them of man's world myth. ("Girls take to the hard work behind the network hardware" *Indian Express* n.p.).

Same idea bringing with S. Lakshmi Devi, principal of Rajguru college of Applied Sciences, D.U. "Networking is not like marketing in which girls have to spend hours outdoors. On the contrary, they have to sit at a place and make sure everything works…." ("Girls take to the hard work behind the network hardware, *Indian Express n.p.*).

According to the International Telecommunication Union 16% fewer women than men used the internet in developing countries in 2013. That figure jumps to 45% in Sub-Saharan, Africa partly due to the costs of mobile broadband making up a higher percentage of women's income" ("Access to infrastructure, APC, *gender IT, org.*).

Consumption of content online is growing rapidly so as to compressing time and space smartphone play a vital role in this regard. By connecting "Cyber" hype with the term feminism in the early 90s opened up immense potential in understanding of new technology as a debate around gender.

In "Zeroes and ones" Plant's basic assumption is that a female signification comes along with the digitalization of society. To argue her theory she stakes up different threads and weaves them together into a model of new society. The spread of non-linear, decentralized and hierarchical structure plays the central part. Plant recognizes them as the return of the "female principle". This process does not result from political or other intervention, but happens automatically, without any effort. Making this assertion transfers power and creativity to the new technologies, their inherent characteristics and the constellation they arise from. The female and the digital society are her inspiration, and she brings them together in a way from which neither can escape anymore" (Dragojlove n.p.).

It is a place for women – "where women are free from traditional constraints and are able to experiment with identity and opening new avenues for claiming power and authority. Plant's view of cyberspace is as a welcoming, familiar space for women where they can and must seize opportunities to advance themselves and to challenge make authority". (Mia Consalvo, "Cyberfeminism" Sage pub.).

Here desired goal is gender equity in new media technologies. Acquiring technological proficiency or expertise, becoming more fluent in online space they can study how power and knowledge are constructed in technological systems, where they can change this practices for betterment of society. Linking up body with machines cyber feminism segregating of sex and gender.

Scholars such as Jessie Daniels suggests that "Cyber feminists" refers to a range of theories, debates and practices about the relationship between gender and digital culture" (Rethinking Cyber feminism (s) : Race, Gender and Embodiment. Women's studies quarterly 37 (1) : 101 – 124).

Review of literature:

"Review of literature is necessary to know the findings of similar studies carried out in the past and uniqueness of the present study" (Prakash Bhairo Bilawar page 424).

Macfarland Sofia examined how Muslim women increasingly enter in cyberspace and has "fielding a slow of queries about proper online behavior, such as whether it is acceptable for women to have a e-mail contact and whether online shopping is permissible in Islam" (Sofia, Macfarland."Internet can open and close-doors for Muslim Women living in Seclusion*"Indian Express 9 April 2016: n.p. print*).

Sadie Plant view cyber feminism as an importance of women comes along with the digitalization. With Mia Consalvo cyber feminism comes along with the empowerment of women by becoming fluent in online communication and technological expertise.Jessie Daniels refers cyber-feminism as a relationship between gender and digital culture.

VNS Matrix, four artist, formulated the first cyber feminist Manifesto during 1990s in Australia, referred themselves as "Geekgirls"(VNS Matrix) and analysed the goal of women "that to infect"(VNS Matrix) certain patriarchal nations of narratives and structures through the machines with radical thoughts.

Sakia Sassen addresses digital technologies as "ending women to engage in new forms of contestation and in proactive endeavours in multiple different realms, from political to economic" ("Towards Sociology of Information" Technology,2002, 368)

Nouraie Simore found "Cyber space" as a "place to resist", where she participates in discussion of "feminism, patriarchy and gender politics." For her, cyber space makes global feminism possible in their life offline on an intimate, immediate and personal level. For her, the internet is a "safe space" to occupy away from a repressive gender regime in the offline world.

Assistant professor, department of sociology, Solapur, Ashok Yakkldevi in his research paper "Cyber feminism: Women and Cyber Sociology define it as a new means towards feminism goals" (Ashok Yakkldevi 1-4).

Vesna Dragjolov Quoting a book Figures of Fantasy by Suzanna Paasonen, a Finnish cyber feminist defines cyber feminism women acquisition of information and digital technologies which is similar to gender studies of new media technologies.

Reviews talk about only one or two same point that are women empowerment into digital space. A place to resist and brings gender equality and various utilization of cyber world that how and what are the platforms given by cyber space using that women are accelerating for the betterment of their lifestyle. How female are celebrating this space in their day to day routine and the activities in relation to social and political economic level.

Although number of studies has been undertaken. However, few shows the adoption of cyber feminism as a platform or a tool of multi-dimensional and multi layers support, benefits to the users.

Hence the present study undertaken realizing the key role and relevance of cyber or online in women's life of offline work scenario, which is not just about the use of digital-technologies by the women for the women but many more as a medium of becoming independent to open resistance, open demand, making communities of social interaction with sisterhood, enhancing social awareness if online education, banking, travel, career, shopping, cooking, gaming, securities as tracking rout through GPS system and many more which facilitate their life.

Women becoming articulated, well decision maker, making balance between multi-tasking responsibilities with their offline to online behaviour and thus transforming their life cycle.

Through online available resources getting in touch across the world with the help of instant mailing, messaging, video conferencing, through public debate and discussion, communication collaboration and participation they are flourishing their way of life. Such as use of website like LinkedIn and Facebook may promote heightened learning effect.

"In short, cyber feminism, is identified by an insistence on equality rather than oppression, plurality rather than binaries, fluidity rather than categorization unity rather than separatism– a vision inspired by the increasing sophistication of technology and the advent of body free communication." (Kira Hall, "Cyberfeminism" 148-159).

Quoting Faith wilding Vesna Dragojlov says, once we link feminism(s) to "Cyber" meaning to govern and control we create some great opportunities for feminism within the framework of the electronic age.

Cyber feminism could link the disparate lives and experience of women trans-nationally and trans-culturally in the integrated circuit taking into full consideration issues of age, race, class and political differences, thus assigning cyber feminism their heterogeneous characteristics.

Jessie Daniels in her "Rethinking cyber feminism gave an example from Mexico, where a number of feminist NGOs, have used the internet in their efforts to cross National frontiers to establish system if global support and exchange in pursuit of a more gender equitable society. (Merithew 2004).

Mobile as a device of Cyberfeminism:

Everyone wants ease, convenience, comfortable approach to on-line space spryness on a single finger touch anytime, anywhere locally or globally so mobile play a vital role in this pursuit.

Speedy advancement of handheld devices such as smartphone makes women life more advanced and assist them for better, quick and fast sharing of information, traversing the geographical gap and time.

"Proving oneself in a male dominated industry creates challenges to excel"- (Pretorius et al) As many responsibilities carried out by women so use of mobiles makes these challenges easier to handle in their personal or professional life.

Functions through Mobile:

Calling, short text messages, alarm, reminder, [phone book, music, camera, calendar, Games, e-mail, chatting, browsing the web, file storage, multimedia messages system, calculator, time, social medias, Apps, Google search and play, advertisement, mobile optimized websites, education videos, and websites etc. downloading, entertainment online discussion, chatting, security alert tracking location through GPS system.

All these facilities are available with the varieties of purposes of using of mobile phones such as – shopping, chatting, instant messaging updates alerts and enquiry, internet access etc.

These numbers of functionalities of hand hold portable devices makes women more active and aware of internet world in their day today surroundings.

Thus scope of cyber feminism becomes vaster with the advancement of such hand held devices. Its handy and affordable increases communication globally. Increase active involvement socially, publically, personally and politically withy motivations innovativeness.

Thus, in order to test the objectives, hypothesis frames that no significant difference between, Computer and Smartphones.

There exists a positive relation of women with cyber space.

"Women are often excluded from the development and implementation of technology because of cultural biases" (Access to infrastructure, *genderIT.org*) But "The significance of access to the internet, mobile telephony and other means of communications facilitated by technology have long been identified by researchers and policy makers alike as central to improving empowerment of women and marginalized communities. From women in Uganda running a profitable business with the help of their mobile phones, to young women in India accessing websites that allow them to make more informed decisions about their sexual health, there are many documented cases that demonstrate ICTs' potential for women's empowerment." (Access to infrastructure, *gender, IT.org*).

Accessibility to e-mail and social media updates via portable devices has enables women to be in frequent, immediate and on time interaction knowledge sharing through networking sites belongs, wikies, and thus women emerging as advance, aware, responsive, articulate. Quite easy to allocate, spread and accumulate easily accessible, connected to peer and user community emerging as a need and essential part of life. They are operating it from their home too along with home based duties which offers more freedom and flexibly to its usage.

Mobile as a best portable device so as to, taking women's safety into the mind, a new project has been announced through a negotiation between Ministry of Women and Child Development and IT and Telecommunication that all mobile manufactures will produce handsets with a panic button from January 1,2017. Walking alone or nervous about driver, this facility will allow a person to long press a set of button which will send allow a person to long press a set of button which will send out an alert to the users family or friends, besides information on the location. (*Times of India,* 13).

This is the key project that will funded through the Nirbhya fund set up by the UPA government. A source said to Times of India. "For existing phones a software with same function as panic button will be launched soon in ordinary handsets, that user can go to a service centre and get the application download for free." (the official said *to Times of India*). "physical expansion of mobile services makes easier the process of money transfers too, through the ubiquitous mobile phones (UPI) Unified Payment Interface which allow people to transfer money from their bank accounts through mobile phones where it seems as simple as sending text messages. (*Times of India,* 13).

In business, money transfer, banking payment from cash to digital makes women's routine life and ways of conducting day to day life activities less cumbersome.

"Women outspends men in online shopping: study said, women are also internet and tech savy gender, when it comes to buying things through their smarts phones. They are more active on the internet (47 hours) as compare to men (28 hours) per week for online shopping, social networking sites, banking, booking tickets-mails, payment" (*Times of India*,13 April,2016). And these all becomes more favourable by the users of handset phones.

The following chapters discuss the impact of cyber space on women, attitudes, skills access. The next chapters highlight the cause or factors of women's mobilization and flexibility to digital space with the findings of diffuseness of cyber feminism.

Chapters will deal with studies of some cyber feministic activism, Websites, while studying these through the news published in newspaper, journals, magazines.'

The third chapters is planned to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of cyber feminism providing the role of lack of knowledge of digital empowerment to women.

The final chapters will be that of "Conclusion".

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