

Chapter – II

Activism, Websites and Movies

Activism

“Social movements whose common goals are audience, attention and action; each of which have proven to be exponentially more achievable through the global interconnectivity of the web.” (“A Theory of information Laundering” Adam Klein n.p.).

Uses of technologies and cyber spaces enhances their life “Social media activism has become very relevant for many student activist groups” (Alcides Velasquez and Robert LaRose).

The recent example of this is NIIT Srinagar case when two girls students inside from their hostel room through video conferencing to zee news Channel addressed to MHRD, raised their choice publically expressed their anger publically and agitation of varsity asking for getting back the National Flag to them. (*Zee News*, “Taal Thokkar” talk with Anupam Khaer, 11 April 2016).

“The internet has enabled vast improvements in the work of women’s rights activities and organizations. Raising awareness, engaging in dialogue, creating networks across borders, mobilizing people and putting pressure on decision makers are all easier than ever before. In fact, 90% of activist working on feminists, LGBTQI, sexual and reproductive health or HIV/AIDS and youth, adolescent and children’s rights issues say their advocacy would be difficult or impossible without the internet” (EROTICS, 2013) from *gender IT.org*.

“If you can’t stop him, snap him,” is the tag line for the website Holla back NYC (*hollabacknyc.com*). The site’s creators, fed up with everyday harassment by men exposing themselves on New York’s streets and subways, encourage women to use their internet enabled cell phones to snap photos of harassers and technology is emblematic of an array of new expression of feminist practices called “cyber feminism” Among cyber feminists (orgad 2005; Plant 1997; Podlas 2000), some have suggested that internet technologies can regimes and enacting equality” (Jessie Daniels, "Rethinking cyberfeminism..." n.p.).

Thus, cyber feministic activism demonstrates the mobility of woman and flexibility of spaces that cyber world offers to them. This is a democratic platform everyone can write here without any hesitation without such platform an average woman can’t reach on public forum, can’t get opportunities to write and articulate openly on social media. It shows potential for women’s empowerment. There are much discussions of language on internet. For example, “slut shaming”, if a woman controls her sexuality then she was called slut and place at bottom. But there is no such word slut for males.

Language influence our thoughts very much. And if such discussion takes place at any time anywhere without internet it can’t reached to public. “Internet have opened up the potential for women to break out of the boundaries imposed on them through decades under the rule of masculine’s power.” (Ashok Yakkaldevi 148-159) Gajjala recognizes this agency by pointing out that the very people who are excluded who are excluded from mainstream society want to include themselves in these new technologies on their own terms so that “they can see themselves as protagonists of the revolution” (2003, 49). For many women, including themselves in these new technologies means including themselves in internet worked global feminism.

Although women are progressing in every field being a pilot to housewife still patriarchal mind-sets and gender bias continue to plague them right into the 21st century.

The Campaign “It’s a Dress, Not a Yes” started in January 2011, is one of the example of above saying when a Toronto constable warned students that to avoid getting raped they shouldn’t dress like sluts. “Within months, anti-rape activists began taking to the streets in slut walks from New York to New Delhi through social media (*msmagazine.com*). Here cannot forget the role of internet. Because of Twitter and facebook such social media site women get their choice publically on globe arena. Whenever any politicians, celebrity or anyone has expressed sexist opinion, it is criticized through such site.

Why women can’t have the rights as men have. Men can urinate openly anywhere but women can’t wear a dress on their choice. If she does so, she called as “slut” but for men. Is there any word like this a answer will be always no. Sexist opinion related to girls dress code remains the same in Indian scenario too school and colleges which has been always criticized too through the help of online space. Because women are not now dumb or illiterate. They are realizing the potential of cyber world. Although some women are not feminist and not well aware to their rights and their value in the society and accepting the patriarchal dominance and accepting it as normal thus sometime failed to assist other women in their progressive attitude of life.

But cyber feminist activism will never spare such sexist opinion and will always find with victorious celebrated result through the communities of sisterhood or the sense of solidarity between women. Digital space is one of the best platform of their unity and solidarity.

Time has come for men to take their own responsibility on their thoughts and actions. In digital space men have no more the power to make ethical, rational decisions about everything matters, large and small.

Campaigns “dress not a yes” sparked international outrage revealed the misogyny and victim-blaming vitriol that characterize contemporary patriarchal culture. In slut walk movement one Young Muslim woman in a burka held a sign stating that her burka had not protected her from rape. This message across the globe was loud and clear: Don’t focus on how we dress-focus on the rate culture. This went to abolished the myth of good and bad girl.

“Digital social media and mass media have created cross – national flows of information regarding slut walk activities. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter appear to be the main organizing tools for the hundreds of local protests that were organized on every continent. Most events have a Facebook page with mobilization plans, photos and video clips, as well as statements of purpose, slogans and mission statements. Jackie Smith writes in her study of the anti-WTO protests of 1999 that “both national and transnational social movement groups make expensive use of internet sites and electronic list serves to expand communication with dispersed constituencies and audiences ... [that] allow organizers to almost instantaneously transmit alternative media accounts and images of protest” (Smith 2002, 220). Since the “Battle of Seattle” Smith documents, the role and importance of social media has greatly expanded, and the Slutwalk movement illustrates this expansion very clearly.” (JoettaL.Carr)

The same campaign “#ThisDoesn’tMeanYes” captured images of 200 women across London and gradually it increased day by day and produced 2000 photographs accompanies by

the logo “#ThisDoesn’tMeanYess” feature women wearing short skirts, red lipsticks, sleeveless sheath dresses and other trendy skin-baring clothes.

Another similar remark came by a professor at the prestigious National Law School of Indian University, Bengaluru. The professor chastised the student before the entire class by asking her to “dress properly.” “The student girl was deeply uncomfortable with the remarks wearing shorts to classes has sparked off protests with several of the students. This remarks on classmates showing solidarity by dressing up in shorts the next day.” (“NLSU professor pulls up student for her shorts” *Times of India* 10).

Women are constantly portrayed as sex objects and it is implied that it is natural for men to pursue women to the point of coercion. “And there is a myth too that surrounds women, a myth that embroils them: women who dress or behave suggestively, women who are playful or who act provocatively, women who flirt or openly discuss sex – they are ‘asking for it.’ It’s an insidious fable, and it needs to stop. Every woman has a right to freedom of expression. No women deserve to be raped for it. A short skirt can’t talk a short skirt can’t say yes. A real by lip is not a yes. A walk home is not a yes. What I wear and how I behave are not women shouldn’t have to suppress their invitations individuality in fear of an attack” (*dailymail.co.uk...*). Thus campaign asks women to join the movement by uploading their images to Instagram using the harsh tag. In January, 2015 the head of the crown prosecution service, Alison Saunders, said society must challenge the view that rape, victims should be blamed if they had been drinking. (Martha Cliff for Mail online). Thus, such misogynistic overtones have been criticized by “cyberfeminist” activism and we saw we will see technology as a way to dissolve sex through dot-com.

Campaign on women’s entrance in Shanishignapur Temple:

Although women and men both have sane treatment and facility at ShaniShignapur Temple in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra. Except Pandits and Pujaris of the temple no one allowed to touch the idol worship Lord Shani standing on that platform. All visitors have to pray from outside the barricade which is kept around the idol.

But the two main points/discriminated activities became the cause of next movement run by 350 women activists or volunteers under the banner of Ranragini BhumataBrigade (women warriors of Mother Earth) led by its President Trupti Desai who were stopped by police in village known as Sonai 70 km from the shrine banning women from entering its sacred sanctum.

The two causes as mentioned above were First – A Hindu religion leaders' Swami Shankaracharya Swaroopanand's sexist statements that allowing women into a shrine devoted to Lord Shani will increase rapes. The women are worshipping Shani in the temple. By doing so, Shani's eyes would fall on women and this would result in increase of rape incidents." (qtd. *bbc.com*)

Second – In 2015, one of the temple priests carried an elaborate ritual milk cleansing after a woman managed to gain entry inside and offer prayers.

These two gender discriminated shameful activities have caused outrage in India and highly criticized through social media. Although constitution clearly states under Article 25 – all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion. Then why such discrimination for Dalits and same as to women. Everyone has equal share in it.

So this collaborated effort for justice and equality show the symbol of strengthened civil society and women's power and has given a big blow to conservative thoughts. As a women's efforts for temple entry. This needs to be understand by those who run the business for the religion. And thus, this women's efforts were celebrated victory through entering inside the temple and worshipping the land equally. Cyber feminism is one of the big weapon against male dominance.

And the result came up of this weapon that "The Temple trusts decision come following a Bombay high Court order on April where it said that it is women's fundamental right to go into place of worship and government is duty bound to protect it. ("After 400 yrs., Women enter inner Sanctum of Shani Temple" Times of India 1).

Sexism masquerades as religion in Indian most of the temple but the truth of ages is that no religion can ever be based on discrimination. But still there are some sections of society who do not accept women as "pure", when they have their period. They are prohibited from going to temples, touch idols, or even touch something like pickle. In fact, in mane rural parts of the country menstruating girls are asked to stay in separate rooms that are outside the huts." (Hemani Bhandari *#Happy Bleed Campaign*).

The protest of women's entrance into ShaniShignapur temple follows another controversy arising from the Sabarimala Temple which is one of the most popular Hindu pilgrimage centres in India of Lord Ayyappan in southern Kerala. Women in menstrual age group as in Haji Ali Dargah too banned for entrance. With a Facebook campaign "#HappyToBleed" movement outraged again due to a sexist comment by Prayer Gopala Krishnan, the Chief Travancore Dewaswami that manages Sabarimala Temple. While speaking to the media on November 13, 2015 he had

reportedly talked about a machine to scan if it is the right time for a woman to enter the Sabarimala temple which does not allow access to women in the reproductive age. (K Faye Ahmad *Facebook*)

He wanted to install machines outside the temple to check if women were menstruating. Speaking to reporters he had said, “when that machine is invented we will talk about letting women inside.”

On This the 80 years-old Nikita Azad was outraged and decided to do something about it, with a few of her friends started a online campaign on Facebook titled “Happy to Bleed”, which has generated massive support from women across the country, which is a counter – campaign to fight menstrual taboos. It acknowledges menstruation as a natural activity which doesn’t need curtains to hide behind.” (Hemani Bhandari n.p.)

The campaign is inviting women to participate by taking a picture of themselves holding a chart or placards/sanitary napkins with the words “# HappyToBleed” and upload it to their profiles or post on the page.

This misogynist statement that women would be permitted to enter the temple after the invention of a scanning machine criticized everywhere.

“Women are denied entry to the temple because of the belief that menstruation makes them impure,” the Facebook page of the campaign states. “We have started #HappyToBleed as a form of resistance against patriarchal belief about menstruation notions that consider women the property of men and society.”

Aditi Gupta, founder of Menstrupedia, writes–

“I have a Uterus and I bleed once every month. God does not get angry if I pray during my #periods. Mr. Prayar Gopal krishnan and everyone who thinks women are impure during their period, don't forget it's the same “Impurity” you survived on, for 9 months inside your mother's womb”(Aditi Gupta #HappyToBleed).

This shows one of the climax and power of cyberfeminism where women are easily breaking all the myths, taboos and hypocrisy of society publically and very clearly also supporting the cyber feminist campaign.

In this way cyber feminism challenging rigidity confronting their persecutors and resonating with millions. And emerging as the new feminism discipline of cyber feminism with debates about the benefit of the internet to feminist thoughts by “creating network of women from all over the world fighting for difficult feminist causes” (qtd in *Cyberfeminist Interaction:the Gendered Effects of First-person Postings on Harassment Websites*. Diss. London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011. Solapur: Research Direction Journal, 2011.5 Print).

Moreover, we cannot forget important and vital role of Twitter and Facebook as a cyberfeminist activism at the time of brutal case of Nirbhaya, when not only Indian women but women from all over the world belonging most of the class and society in general stood on a single podium of campaign the “black dots of shame”. Through social media and expressing their accumulated frustrations wrath and outrage against the failure of government.

Websites

“For racist movements, websites like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, present the most ideal platform for sharing their own information views and communities with the masses in a mainstream” (Adam Klein “Communication Theory” n.p.).

For day to inquiries the search engine like Yahoo, MSN, Bing, Google are most popular websites. Popular among relating to a specific topic. These search engines websites have become an essential part of everyone's lives as a biggest source of information on the Internet.

Today women are living in the age of information where knowledge is power and internet as a power house of knowledge. Verities of websites provides variation of usage along with information makes women's most of the activities and needs less cumbersome.

Such as – For shopping and lifestyle – Flipkart, Amazon, Snapdeal, Quicker, Zivame.com specially for women's lingerie online store, voonik.com- for fashion online store. Offline shopping seems nearly to come at end by the emergence of online shopping even all kinds of groceries and fruits, women can get on a single click through naturebasket.com, shopclues.com. Thus cyber feminism motivates, stimulates and make women more independent. Now they are moving on every path freely everywhere.

Career oriented websites like – linked.in, Naukri.com etc.

Travel oriented – cleartrip, makemytrip., social – Gmail and others

For news – TOI, NDTV etc.

Paytm.com- a prominent website for paying any bill anytime, Ganeshaspeaks.com – without wondering in search of any pandit and astrologer outside the home women can get future prediction through login into this website.

Sarkarinaukari.com – where women can connect to government. Sarkarinaukari.com – provides all the inquiries and answer related to government jobs. For selection and buying of

properties anywhere, Makaan.com, magicbricks.com. LinkedIn the world's largest professional networking site.”

www.homeveda.com – “This website is dedicated to natural home remedy needs of women that will help them take care of common health ailment even beauty issues. And the solution like acne, cellulite, asthma, menstrual, problems, infections, allergies and more. Diet for food base therapy to help them in fighting hair loss. Fitness for tips on how to get rid of back ache, swollen feet, joint pain, etal – as well as a complete section of baby care. And any other problem that one have with solution. Each article or health feature is accompanied with an informative video” (“HomeVeda” *Times of India* n.p.).

Change.org

Change.org – “the fastest – growing website for social change in the change.org is a petition website with a mission to “empower people everywhere to create the change they want to see” (*Wikipedia.org*).

Popular topics of change.org petitions are economic and criminal justice, human rights, education, environmental protection, animals right, health.

Change.org play a vital role in cyberfeminism women can easily raise the issues traditionally associated with them by demanding, asking to change and inviting others to sign the petition and join the campaign. As woman in London were demanding a zero tax rate for sanitary products. After all they got their demand.

Change.org is one of a gender equality, social action and change platform on the web. Rashmi Bachani's petition for women travelling on busses booked via travel site redbus.in and

looking forward to a safe and secure journey where her petition was supported by 1.4 lakh people and leads to victory. Altogether they got a response from its manager saying “Thank you for your suggestions, we will attempt to implement the same.” (Rashmi Bachani, *change.org*)

The petition is here transparent, appealing and directly addressed to concern person with clear cut points which modification and improvement need to be done. It is a website for something which you care for and need to be changed. If you want to change something, start a petition. It is for women complain and for their demand both.

Another petition in this chain was started by:

Teresa Sabu as “Empower Women: Open the gates of NDA”. The National defence Academy is the only institute that accepts undergraduates looking for a career in the military or paramilitary but it is closed to women. For this Teresa started a petition soon joined by a huge number of women supporters for the same asking the Home Ministry to open the NDA’s doors to women so that more women can join the Indian Armed Forces. In short, there are many other cyberfeminist petition where women are coming forth with their demand and appeal for changing the nation better condition of women livelihood. Asking about women’s liberation, safety of women folk and women’s rights.

“The social media enabling women to take step for participation in relevant discussion and pressing government and private sector for change”. (Sabu,Teresa. "Empower Women Open the Gate." N.p., n.d. Web. 5 May 2016.)

Shaabdi.com

Marriage is not a simple thing to do. It involves two people, their attitudes, their emotions, feelings, relations, psychology, wishes and personalities. Compatibility, commitment, community, interaction, chemistry between the two, are the most required links for a successful marriage. In this regards website shaadi.com emerged as a world's largest online matchmaking site with one simple objective "to provide a superior matchmaking experiences to Indian all over the world". (introduction, *Shaadi.com*). Where women are getting advantages from this website. Earlier girls were kept behind the wall or behind the curtain even the photograph of male partner were not allowed them to see. And the whole soul decision maker of marriage arrangement in the hand of male members of the family. Such notions are still one can see in some parts of Indian society. It doesn't mean that earlier marriages were not successful and compatible. But the new thing is that in this new age of cyber world, in the age of information science internet facilitate women's life more than before. Website inculcates their decision making power and getting options to live on their own.

"Internet adoption across India was poor at the time and conservative parents were hesitant to arrange marriages through a new start up it saw success over the next fifteen years as internet adoption increased and people become more receptive to alive matchmaking" It had twenty million users by 2011 (*Wikipedia*).

In 2012 shaadi.com launched the Facebook game Angry brides to bring awareness to dowry abuses in India." (*Wikipedia*)

In 2014 shaadi.com launched shaadi.com cares, a social initiative to educate and empower women regarding marital issues, including dowry and domestic violence”. (*Wikipedia*)

“According to a 2013 ASSOCHAM report, the country’s online Matrimony business is expected to grow at 65% to become a Rs. 1,500 crore industry by 2017. The study noted that between 2012 and 2013, about 50 – 55 million online subscribers registered their profiles while 2.5 million uploaded their profiles per month to take advantage of this facility mainly on account of it being economical and less cumbersome” (“WCD outlines norms for matrimonial sites” *Time of India*).

In short match making in cyber space is a place for mutual understanding, interaction, discussion togetherness but not the place for dowry. Women empowered through internet can choose and select life partner from any corner of the world under one roof.

Movies:

“**Masaan**” is not only a story of crematorium or burning of dead bodies for salvation but much more to this. Story revolves around ordinary people of two narratives depicted in mundane situation and their reaction.

Two young couple progress through virtual to real world, On-line space to Off- line realizing actualities of it i.e. corruption, greed dirty aspects of society caste-ism and other consequences of cyber space in their life.

Film commences with a women Devi watching porn on YouTube, went to hotel room with her boyfriend of computer coaching class. These were interrupted with police raid and even got confession from Devi on Video tape. Scared Piyush slits his wrist and dies. Now for Devi YouTube proofs as a medium of her pacification as she was curious having “Jigyasa” seems by one of her dialogue. On the other hand, recorded video becomes as a means of tragic consequences. Corrupted inspector Mishra started blackmailing her and her father, threatens to put video on YouTube, if they don’t give him 3 lakhs in 3 months to save their family honour.

Second narrative begins with Shalu’s acceptance of Facebook request and thus progression start with long-long mobile phone conversation and techno-chat on Facebook. As a world of internet and mobile phones, they constantly coming near to each other connected with technology thus push and pull of old and new brings shocking changes to their life.

They were so apart; internet was only a means of bridge between them. Otherwise, they would never be able to meet.

Forbidden fruit and medium of freedom i.e. Facebook seems as an urgent need of young generation as director wants to demonstrate through Masaan.

“Film offers a realistic portrayal of the hypocritical society that we live in which looks at pre-marital sex between two adults as a taboo, but doesn’t hesitate exploiting it in every other way.” (Shetty,Shubha.”Masaan movie review”*mid-day.com* accessed 22 June 2016, n.p.)

Sadness, happiness and pleasure, all blossoms through the means of digital space to two women of the film. A motherless girl, yearning for family, tormented by orthodox construction of her surrounding challenging male notion of society, faces boldly the consequences. Devi is a computer literate girl rest of the film is about the way she deals this matter with her society, father and herself. There is something in her past that bother her and can be a cause of her mobilization into digital space, soon she got a job as railway computer clerk just to pay off the greedy Inspector blackmailing amount and thus assist her father.

Movie compel us to think, whether women entrapped in advancement of technology or they entrapped in duplicity and falseness of Patriarchal society where women consider as a bearer of honour of family but on getting chance men never hesitates to dishonour her honour.

In short, cyber space affects her life style, her thought, her vision. Thus, it gives women open space on which they flavoured their life, accepts its challenges boldly.

In second story, actor Shalu belongs to high caste connect to Deepak through Facebook son of Dom, belongs to low caste corpse burner clan. Again cyber feminism emerges as a means of challenges the concept that is women are the vessel of the family reputation as it proofs by one of her dialogue, when she phoned to Deepak and assured him. If there is opposition from her family, “We will elope, bhaag ke jaana hoga, toh bhaag bhilenge.” Symbolically cyber space played a vital role in these two women’s life and provides them whole compass of life and Death.

Login

Internet if not used wisely can affect not only women's life but any one's life adversely. With this message story demonstrate, women as a victims of cybercrime and they are victimizer too. Here cyber feminism plays double role i.e. one as a victim of a man through cybercrime, another as a victimizer through the cyber space by making an emotional fool to a frustrated office man named Jai who never being kissed by girl feeling lankness inside seeks a girlfriend through online dating sites. Computer connected girl friend of Jai, named Puja. Her true identity was a one of a member of "Kidney snatcher gang" which forces Jai to face tragic consequences. Going through in depth of relation Jai lost not only his whole money but two of his kidney and life. His long run web happiness was thus short lived. In short cybercrime expert Puja weaned out her boyfriend's hangover of techno-chat.

Vandana mother and wife of well earning man, being housewife glued to internet, bored, confused with life and time mobilized towards net chatting. Got attracted to a old school time friend via Net surfing. Living in a false doubt, suspected her busy husband having an affair with an office colleague. Depressed, gets message through mobile from her Facebook friend bed with him, who dumped her, taken advantage of all her deposited amount and at last she lost everything, spoiled her family, socially scattered, alone. Spending free time in chatting on social networking sites left her socially disconnected, away from husband daughter and friends.

Debashish Mandal (Debu) agitated working in a call centre busy in attending call from dues recovery bank agents. Debu was in tough situation as his neck deep in credit card debts. In an attempt he wanted to clear it all over night so he choosed the way of Online hacking and fraud. Started using net to make money. Although he soon ascends as a king as he wished to be but soon descended with all his money and died.

These are the key messages which carried out by “Login”, 2012 released movie. 3 characters connected online disconnected offline, unaware the perils of cyber world. Opposite to this if used in right perspective proof as a great means of human kind.

Usage of internet, browsing network social sites that affect the lives, form the crux of the story. In short, movie is not about social networking but the hazards of using the internet carelessly and loneliness of urbanites.

Bajrangi Bhaijan

Where print media takes much time to reach, electronic media reaches in a minute or a second. As in the movie name “Bajrangi Bhaijan”. Pawan’s efforts to unite a girl child named Munni who misses her parents in the train across the border is successfully performed at last through the helps of digital media YouTube. She recognizes her mother immediately seeing her video in YouTube uploaded by Chandnavab that became a viral within an hour in India and Pakistan.

Although efforts have been done by men but after all it benefited to women, who revived their lost happiness.

Again cyberspace play a vital role in women’s life because Munni girl was speech-impaired, no television station agrees to air the news of this lost girl. No other ways left. Reviewing the footage, Munni recognizes her mother walking by in the background. With a bus driver’s assistance, the three identify Sultanpur as small Pakistan Child’s hometown.

In short, YouTube video, or role of internet inspired a complete solution in the movie. So it symbolizes togetherness, quick medium of helping each other anywhere, anytime, as a harbinger

of harmony and friendship. It shows the way, how women are mobilising towards the ubiquitousness of Cyber space. They are understanding it's use, relevance, broad future scope and capacity to be everywhere, anywhere, anytime and thus Cyberfeminism are getting their identity. It's all about how they influence from it and how they implement of it.

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