

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**‘Silence No More’: An In-Depth Cyberconflict Analysis of the Nirbhaya Rape Case
and Digital Gender Activism in India**

Thesis submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
In Media, Culture, and Society
at the University of Hull
by

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March 2016

I dedicate this research to my father. He reminded me every day to never give up the pursuit of knowledge. It is because of his unconditional belief and trust that I have been able to embark on this journey. It is also his passion, his activism, his politics, his feminist ideologies and his faith in knowledge that has motivated me to choose this path. He will forever be my greatest inspiration.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Athina Karatzogianni, for her constant support and understanding. This research would not be possible without her belief in my work and her guidance. I also wish to thank my second supervisor, Dr. Bev Orton, for all her encouragement, support and care.

I wish to thank Dr. Suzanne Clisby for her advice and inspiration and all my teachers who have guided me in this journey.

I also wish to thank my family, my partner, my wonderful grandparents and my friends for their unconditional love and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother, the most inspirational woman in my life. She is the only reason why I am here today. I cannot thank her enough for always having faith in me and being such a magnificent role model.

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Abstract

Sociopolitical activism has been crucial in shaping the structure of the contemporary Indian society. Over the last few decades, while information and communication technologies (ICTs) and social media have been increasingly popular and a widely used tool for activism around the world, it is only in the recent past that people have started using these technologies as an alternative platform for activism in India. One of the most extensive use of digital technologies was witnessed in the nationwide protests in India post the Delhi Nirbhaya rape case on December 16, 2012 making it one of the biggest gender movements that the country has witnessed. The focus of this research is to investigate the use of ICTs and social media by civil society actors, activists and organisations specifically for gender activism in India. The cyberconflict framework (Karatzogianni 2006; 2015) forms the foundation of this research. However, this framework was not built with a gender focus and to explore the use of digital technologies specifically for gender activism, it was crucial to advance the theoretical foundation of the cyberconflict framework for it to create a broader understanding of the relation between social movements, gender and ICTs. For the purpose of this study, the protests after the Nirbhaya rape case on December 16, 2012 have been considered as a primary case study. Further data was collected from various online resources such as news reports published online, videos, articles on blogs, posts on social media sources such as Facebook and Twitter and by conducting semi-structured interviews with organisations and individual participants. Further thematic analysis was used to understand the nature and impact of use of ICTs and social media for gender activism in India.

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, digital technologies, including the Internet, social media and mobile phones, have become an integral part in the lives of people across the world. New sophisticated technologies have empowered people not only to use information and communication technologies (ICTs) for personal communications but also enabled them to develop personal relationships in the online space. These relationships are very similar to the relationships developed in the real world, thus often fading the lines between the real and the virtual, the online and offline. However, ICTs have not only changed the way people communicate on a personal level but revolutionised the way people collaborate, interact and form shared identities. This has made such technologies an integral part of emergent social movements that use ICTs in unique and innovative ways in order to create opportunities, build profitable relationships, collect resources, develop collective identity, generate mobilisation and to lobby.

Sociopolitical activism has been crucial in shaping the contemporary structure of Indian society. However, people have only recently started using ICTs and social media as an alternative platform for activism in India. One of the most extensive uses of digital technologies was witnessed in the nationwide protests in India post the Delhi Nirbhaya rape case on December 16, 2012. Even though activism in cyberspace is an area that has been well researched, mainstreaming gender in the theoretical discourses of digital activism is an area which needs to be developed further. In the context of this framework it is important to justify why I have used the term mainstreaming. Walby (2005) defines gender mainstreaming as a process to promote gender equality and increase the effectiveness of mainline policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, practices and outcomes. However, as a form of theory, gender mainstreaming is ‘a process of revision of key concepts to grasp more adequately a world that is gendered, rather than the establishment of a separatist gendered theory’ (Walby 2005: 321). Following this, I have used the term mainstreaming in relation to extending the cyberconflict framework and revising key concepts within the framework to recognise gender practices and for it to create a broader understanding of the relation between social movements, gender and ICTs. The main aim of this research is to provide an in-depth cyberconflict analysis of the Nirbhaya case and to investigate the use of

ICTs and social media by civil society actors, activists and organisations specifically for gender activism in India.

In this context it is also important to define what is meant by patriarchy. According to Walby (1989), patriarchy is indispensable to create an understanding of gender inequalities that exist in society. Radical feminists have defined patriarchy as a system of domination in which men as a collective group dominate women as a group and they are also the main beneficiaries of the subordination of women. They further state that patriarchy does not derive from any other systems of inequality and it is not a by-product of capitalism (Walby 1989). Marxist feminists, on the other hand, consider the male domination of women to be a by-product of capitalism and they analyse the relationships between patriarchy and class under capitalism (Kandiyoti 1988). Liberal feminists differ from both radical and Marxist feminists and believe that women's subordination is a result of the summation of several small-scale deprivations. Dual-system theorists, however, take into consideration both the radical and Marxist feminist approach and rather than having specific focus on either patriarchy or capitalism, they conclude that both systems exist and are important in structuring contemporary gender relations and gender inequalities (Walby 1989).

Walby (1989), argues that there are several patriarchal structures in society that aids in suppressing women. She further states that patriarchy can operate via paid work where women are severely discriminated leading to lower rates of pay as compared to men or even through gendered divisions of labour within a household that compels women to take up primary responsibility of the household and of childcare. Patriarchy also operates through the cultural representation of feminine attractiveness, male violence against women and through the activities of the state in form of educational opportunities and legal reforms (Walby 1989).

However, the understanding of patriarchy can change in relation to different societies and cultures. India belongs to what has been termed as the belt of 'classic patriarchy' (Kandiyoti 1988). Social structures of these societies are characterised by rigid gender segregation, specific forms of family and kinship and powerful ideology

linking family honour to female virtue. Men are considered to be the primary breadwinners and are largely entrusted with protecting the family honour through their control over women within the family (Kabeer 1988). From a young age, girls are groomed in appropriate behaviour by their mothers or other older women in the family by helping with domestic chores. Thus, in their childhood and adolescence they are trained and prepared for their married life. Due to their inferior status within the household, girls often have less access to food, education and freedom compared to their brothers. However, they are simultaneously seen as ‘repositories of household honour and prestige; often their every act and utterance is closely scrutinised as inappropriate behaviour by a family’s womenfolk threatens the whole family’s honour and, thus, their marriage prospects’ (Rew et al. 2013: 151)

Under classic patriarchy, girls are given away in marriage by their fathers, often at a very young age, into households headed by their husband's father. There, they are considered subordinate not only to all the men in the family but also to the more senior women, especially their mother-in-laws (Kandiyoti 1988). In this system women also derive power from being mothers of sons but as mothers and wives they are ‘inextricably connecting with maintaining male honour and prestige’ (Rew et al. 2013: 148). However, Kandiyoti (1988) states that class and caste have significant impact on classic patriarchy and it also subject to transformation with time. This is particularly true in case of India. In India, the urban middle class population has undergone substantial changes. Large section of women now have access to education, work and technology. Further there is enormous diversity of practice in India, particularly between the North and South of the country. Rew et al. (2013: 150) state that women in the South of the country have consistently exhibited greater female autonomy and more favourable demographic performance. Hence, these differences need to be kept in mind when taking about patriarchy and inequalities that exist in the Indian society. It is also of utmost importance to consider patriarchy as a dynamic process that is contextually specific and changes with time.

This research is deeply rooted in feminist ideas and theories. However, when discussing the case study in question I have used the term gender activism instead of feminist activism. One of the main discourses that emerged after the Nirbhaya case was about

how patriarchy affects all genders and in order to achieve equality, it is important to include all genders in the activism for equality. The activism post-Nirbhaya also witnessed the participation of large number of men giving rise to public discussions about the nature of patriarchy in Indian society, the structure of family and masculinity along with discussions on feminism and feminist activism. Hence, I believe it was important to use the term gender activism instead of feminist activism, in this particular case.

To answer the main research question, I have first looked closely at the cyberconflict framework. The cyberconflict framework was devised by Karatzogianni (2006) in order for us to understand the role of ICTs in social movements. Even though this framework was put forward in the pre-social media age, it is still relevant and extremely useful in understanding activism that depends largely on new digital technologies. The cyberconflict framework combines elements of social movement theory (Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) and New Social Movement (NSM) theories) with media theory and conflict theory in order to understand the motivations, origins, dynamics and impact of ICTs on social movements. This framework, however, was not built with a gender focus and did not extend for it to include the experiences of women separately. However, since this research is based on gender activism, it was necessary for me to look at the cyberconflict framework through the lens of gender and further extend it in order for it to be more critical of gender discourses and create a broader understanding of the relation between gender and ICTs.

This research is significant because it advances the cyberconflict framework by mainstreaming gender in the theoretical discourses making the framework more inclusive and hence developing a framework that can be used as a feminist mode of analysing social movements. There are very few studies currently that analyse the use of ICTs, social media and other digital technologies in gender activism especially in the Indian context. Mendes (2015) details the use of social media to organise, theorise and publicise the SlutWalk campaign in India and it is one of the few studies that explore contemporary digital feminist activism in India. This study will aim to address that gap in research by helping future researchers and activists to understand the changing nature of activism with the help of digital technologies. In order to collect data for this

research, I conducted qualitative interviews both online and in-person during my fieldwork in India. Many of the participants for the research personally requested me to share my research with them and their organisations in the future in order for them to gain a better understanding of the nature and impact of the use of ICTs and social media and also in order to determine how these technologies can be used in the future for gender activism in India.

The Story of Nirbhaya: The Fearless One

On December 16, 2012 a female psychotherapy student from Delhi was on her way home with a male friend after watching *Life of Pi* in a popular theatre in Saket, South Delhi. At about 9:30 PM they boarded a bus from Munirka, Dwarka (a popular area in south Delhi). They were summoned into the bus by a teenage boy stating that the bus would take them to their final destination. There were only six people in the bus including the driver Ram Singh, his brother Mukesh, Vinay Sharma an assistant gym instructor and Pawan Singh, a fruit seller. They became very suspicious when the bus was diverted from its usual route. The doors of the bus were shut and the men started taunting the couple about their relationship, asking what she was doing with a man so late in the night and making lewd and offensive comments. Her male companion tried to protest but he was immediately gagged and then beaten with an iron rod. As he lay unconscious on the floor of the bus the six men attacked her with the same iron rod because she tried to protect her friend (Biswas & Surabhi 4 January 2013). Then two of the accused men took her to the back of the bus and she was raped first by Ram Singh, followed by the teenage boy and then by the others. When the girl had lost consciousness, she was again raped by Ram Singh and the teenager (Osborne 3 January 2013) After that the half-naked bodies of the victims were thrown into the street from the bus. They were discovered around 11 PM by a passer-by and were taken immediately to the hospital.

‘She was in a pool of blood but conscious. There was blood all over her face. I cannot even imagine the agonising pain she must be in’, said the nursing assistant who was taking care of her in the hospital (The Hindustan Times 18 December 2012). Her first

surgery lasted till about four in the morning where the doctors confirmed that she had undergone severe intestinal damage after being repeatedly hit by a blunt object on her abdomen. The extent of damage indicated that a blunt object had also been used to viciously penetrate her. The doctors further confirmed that she had suffered severe injuries on her body and face as she was brutally attacked with the iron rod. After a four hour operation she was put on medical ventilation (Firstpost India 18 December 2012). For the next week she went through a series of surgeries and was declared critical by the doctors.

After a cabinet meeting on the December 25, 2012, it was decided that she would be flown to Singapore and admitted to Mount Elizabeth, a multi-organ transplant hospital. The decision to fly a patient in such critical condition was criticised by doctors all over India. Dr. Samiran Nundy, chairman of the organ transplant and gastro-surgery department of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi commented, 'I just can't understand why a critically ill patient with infection in blood and body, high grade fever and on the ventilator is being transferred. It will take weeks in this case to even look into the possibility of an intestinal transplant so why hurry and take the patient out from a facility which works so well. It seems more of a political move' (Perappadan 28 December 2012). On her flight to Singapore on the December 27, 2012 she suffered a cardiac arrest and her blood pressure dropped alarmingly. The doctors in the flight created an arterial line to stabilise her but she never regained consciousness (The Economic Times 28 December 2012). She was admitted to Mount Elizabeth hospital the next day, with brain damage, abdominal infection and pneumonia (The Times of India 28 December 2012). On the morning of December 29, 2012 she passed away in Singapore. On complying with Indian law, the actual name of the victim was never released to the media and pseudonyms such as 'Damini' (lighting), 'Jagruti' (awareness), 'Amanat' (treasure), or most commonly 'Nirbhaya' (fearless) were used (CNN-IBN 2 January 2013).

When the Nirbhaya case happened I had just started my PhD on cyberconflict and there was no doubt that this particular case had to be my primary case study. There are a few reasons behind this. Firstly, the reaction of the people in India, not just gender activists and organisations, but the general Indian public, was overwhelming. People across the

country came together to protest for justice. Being a women in India can be difficult because of the countless discriminations women experience every single day in various forms, yet this was the first time I had witnessed a gender movement in India of this scale. The second reason was the extensive use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) like mobile phones and social media for organisation, mobilisation and dissemination of information. It was also overwhelming to see the outpour of anger both on the streets and online. It was evident that people had reached their breaking points and wanted change. ICTs became a primary tool not only for organising protest activities but also to generate valuable conversations on various aspects on gender violence and justice. Thirdly, the Nirbhaya case resulted in instant actions being taken by the government, which have not been witnessed before. It resulted in the formulation of laws and changes being added to the Indian Penal Code.

Fourthly, the Nirbhaya case triggered, as Simon-Kumar (2014) says, ‘both publicness and personalisation of rape in a way that has not happened before’ (Simon-Kumar 2014: 452). The case not only resulted in huge protests across the country but also resulted in large numbers of women coming out and breaking their silence about sexual violence that they had personally experienced. Some women did this anonymously but many others also used their actual names. This created a sense of community allowing many other women to come out, discuss and report case of sexual violence in India. Finally, this case resulted in an intense introspection into the nature of Indian society, ideas about patriarchy, and current structures of the government that had clearly failed to provide justice to the women of the country. There were extensive debates, both online and on mainstream media, making gender a significant issue in the public discourse. This further resulted in creating a bigger gender movement in India that started with the Nirbhaya case and stayed alive, flowing from one movement to another, raising awareness to garner support both nationally and internationally.

In Chapter 1: ‘The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations’, I have developed the conceptual framework for this research that informed further analysis. The cyberconflict framework forms the foundation of this research and the framework lays out the following parameters to be looked at while analysing cyberconflicts: 1. Environments of conflicts and conflict mapping (real and virtual) 2. Sociopolitical

cyberconflicts (mobilisation structure, political opportunity structure, framing process)
3. Ethnoreligious cyberconflicts (ethnic religious affiliation, chauvinism, discourses of inclusion and exclusion) 4. The internet as a medium/media theory (Karatzogianni 2006). Following the framework this chapter critically discusses discourses on social movement theory (sociopolitical cyberconflicts), media theory and conflict theory.

In order to fully understand social movement theories and sociopolitical cyberconflicts, it is important to discuss concepts like collective action, mobilisation structures, political opportunity and framing process. This further helps in developing an understanding of the emergence, development and outcome of social movements. In the digital activism environment, it is important to discuss the role of social media and ICTs in social movement.

Castells (2007) states that the structures of the networked society and the influence of new emerging technologies on society has created new concepts of globalisation. Following this, in chapter 1, I also discuss in detail concepts of networked society and nature of activism within this environment. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss core gender theories and relate them to both social movement theories and media theories to mainstream gender within the whole framework to create a broader understanding of the relation between social movements, gender and ICTs. I have considered this so that this framework is not only applicable when analysing gender specific movements but can also be adopted when examining all social movements, which largely depend on ICTs, through the lens of gender.

In Chapter 2: 'Methodology and Empirical Analysis', I talk about the research paradigms and philosophical stances along with establishing the research methodology, data collection and analysis techniques. In order to successfully conduct research, it is important to establish suitable methods and a philosophical underpinning that will guide the research forward and help in answering the questions that have been selected. Since the Nirbhaya case forms the core of this study, I have considered the case study approach to be most appropriate in order to critically analyse the case and extend our understanding of the use of ICTs in gender activism in India.

To obtain an in depth knowledge about the Nirbhaya case and the use of ICTs in gender activism in India, I have adopted a multi method approach for data collection which includes the netnographic approach to obtain online data followed by qualitative interviews which were conducted both online and in-person during my fieldwork in India. Since this research is firmly based in feminist ideologies, both data collection and analysis was conducted from a feminist perspective. The aim of feminist research is to look at women and help in finding the voices that have been ignored, censored or suppressed and by doing so helping in creating a fuller and more accurate account of society (Nielsen 1990). Another common aspect of feminist methodology is the emphasis on the validity of personal experiences and special emphasis must be given not only to the experiences of women but it should become an integral part of the process of analysis (Smith 1987). These values form an integral part of this research.

In Chapter 3: ‘Brief history of the Indian Women’s Movement and Tracing out the Sociopolitical and Media Environment’, I draw a brief history of the women’s movement in India and also explore the sociopolitical, economic and media landscape of the country both in the historic and contemporary context. The cyberconflict framework emphasises the importance of understanding the environment of conflict and conflict mapping both in the real and virtual world. Since this research is based on India, in order to successfully analyse the Nirbhaya case and use of ICTs within the movement, it is extremely important to fully understand the broader historical context of gender movements in India. Further, in order to understand the progression of gender movements and changes it is also equally important to look at the sociopolitical and economic environment, which has either aided in the success, or resulted in the failure of movements.

In Chapter 4: ‘Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework’, I have analysed the Nirbhaya case in the light of social movement theories discussing important aspects such as mobilisation structures, collective action, political opportunity structures and framing processes as witnessed in the Nirbhaya protests. This chapter follows the ‘sociopolitical cyberconflicts’ section of the cyberconflict

framework. This will not only help in fully understanding the emergence, development and sustainability of the movement but also help to further analyse the importance of ICTs and social media in gender activism in India. One of the most remarkable aspects of the Nirbhaya case was the participation of individuals. Previously, mostly women's organisations or NGOs would participate in conversations and protests related to violence against women. However, after the Nirbhaya case, public discourse opened up and individuals along with organisations participated in these conversations harmoniously, which resulted in raising of consciousness. In this chapter, I have also talked about the government reaction after the case and changes in law that were implemented in order to understand the outcome of the movement.

In Chapter 5: 'Nirbhaya and Beyond- the Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India', I have looked at the significance of using of ICTs and social media in the Nirbhaya movement and beyond it for gender activism in India. This chapter follows the 'media theory' section of the cyberconflict framework. Post the Nirbhaya case, India witnessed a deep reflexion into the nature of Indian society, sexual harassment, abuse and the structures of governance that failed to keep women of the country safe. The discussions, both on mainstream media and social media, varied from the nature of patriarchy, family structures, law reforms and enforcement, power dynamic within the society, nature of governance, cause of sexual violence, women's safety in the streets and within the family. India previously had not witnessed such open conversations about different aspects of gender both on a public and on a deeply personal level.

In Chapter 5, I have analysed the use of digital technologies in the Nirbhaya protests in order to understand the role of these technologies in gender activism in India. In this chapter, I have also discussed one of the most important changes post Nirbhaya; the sharing of deeply private stories on social media, which resulted in the creation of community and solidarity that further fuelled the movement. Hence, I have explored the importance of these private stories in gender activism and how these stories have helped in creating a bigger gender movement in India. Finally, I also talk about transnational activism with the help of social media ICTs and how the Indian gender movement has

become a global phenomenon with Indian immigrant across the world becoming an integral part of it.

In Chapter 6: 'The Intersection of Gender, Caste and Class in the Indian Context' I focused on examining the gender movements in India, especially the Nirbhaya case, through the lens of intersectionality. Gender violence in India is not an insulated phenomenon but often it is a result of several intersecting factors such as class, caste, religion and geography. The concept of Intersectionality put forward by Crenshaw (1989) was devised considering the issues faced by black women in United States. In this chapter, I have applied the same framework in the Indian context to understand the nature of violence and discrimination faced by women in India and to explore the intersecting factors of class and caste when looking at gender violence. Using an analysis of the Nirbhaya case through the lens of intersectionality, an understanding of the different factors involved in the case is facilitated as is the rationale for the production of social media attention and resultant action. In this chapter, I have also discussed new forms of intersectionality in the digital space that further marginalises certain women who lack the knowledge of English or availability of access.

In the concluding chapter: 'The Beginning of the New Phase of the Indian Women's Movement', I have summarised the key findings of the research critically analysing the use and impact of ICTs in gender activism in India. Emerging digital technologies have changed the way organisations and NGO are thinking about activism in the digital media environment. I have also discussed the long-term potential of emerging digital technologies, such as social media, mobile phones and other ICTs becoming an integral part of the women's movement and gender activism. Finally, I further set out some recommendations and possible suggestions for further research opportunities.

In the next chapter: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations' I discuss the theoretical foundation of research following the cyberconflict framework. I also advance the theoretical foundation of the cyberconflict framework for it to create a broader understanding of the relation between social movements, gender and ICTs.

Chapter 1: The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations

Digital activism can be defined as political participation, activities and protests organised in digital networks beyond representational politics (Karatzogianni 2006). In this chapter I have established the theoretical discussions and debates around the use and impact of ICTs and social media for contentious activities. McAdam et al. (1996) explain the emergence of social movements, along with their development and outcomes, by addressing three interrelated factors, namely mobilising structures, opportunity structures and framing processes. The cyberconflict framework, developed by Karatzogianni (2006), uses elements of the social movement theory (Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) and New Social Movement Theory (NSM)) including the mobilising structures, political opportunity and framing process in combination with conflict theory and media theory to understand the use and impact of ICTs and social media on political activism using computer-mediated forms of communication.

The cyberconflict framework forms the foundation of this research. However, this framework was not built with a gender focus and to understand the use of ICTs particularly for gender activism it was essential to mainstream gender in the framework and extend it for it to be more critical about gender discourses. Over the years the nature and the type of social movements have evolved, and so has the study of these social

movements. In this chapter I discuss the theoretical considerations and conceptual premise that is of paramount importance in understanding the use of ICTs and social media for the purpose of activism, more specifically, gender activism in the Indian context.

1.1 Social Movements and ICTs

ICTs and social media have played a huge role in protest activities across the globe in the last decade. The use of new ICTs has changed the way activists communicate, collaborate and demonstrate. Scholars from a wide range of disciplines have been focusing on analysing the role of ICTs and social media on protest activities (Garrett 2006). The use of ICTs, Internet and social media as a resource or weapon for social and political activism by social movements and political protest groups can be seen as an extension of a long tradition of activism and that has been further amplified by the development of new technological innovations of communication media (Olabs 2015).

Before discussing the debates and the paradigms around the use of ICTs in social movements, it is important to examine the evolving nature of the study of social movements and the two distinct theories that shaped it. The movements across the globe of the 1960s had a great effect on the study of sociology. However, the most significant effect was the way it led to the reorientation of the study of social movements. In this context Canel (1997) argues, ‘the older theories assumed that the passage from a condition of exploitation or frustration to collective action aimed at reversing the condition was a simple, direct and unmediated process. The new paradigms, in contrast, proposed that this passage from condition to action is a contingent and open process mediated by a number of conjunctural and structural factors’ (Canel 1997: 189). Explaining individual participation has always been a complex problem in the study of social movements. The movements in the 1960 challenged old beliefs leading to a major shift in assumptions and theories. The formulation of the mass society theory, the relative deprivation theory and collective action theory pointed towards ‘sudden increases in individual grievances generated by the ‘structural strains’ of rapid social change’ (Jenkins 1983: 528).

The two distinct theories that emerged from the studies of the social movements after the 1960s was the European new social movement (NSM) approach and the North American resource mobilisation theories (RMT). Both perspectives concentrate on the various theoretical debates in their respective regions in the post-industrial societies and have reformulated the traditional approaches to collective action which is essential for the study for social movements (Canel 1997). NSM theory questioned reductionist Marxism placing the working class in a privileged position (Morris & Muller 1992). On the other hand, RMT criticised the views of Durkheim on collective action as anomic and irrational behaviour resulting from rapid social change (Barnes 2001). It also questions the relative deprivation theory, which assumed that there is a direct link between perceived deprivation and collective action (Canel 1997).

RMT also emphasises the political nature of the new social movements and the continuity between old and new collective actors. McCarthy and Zald (1977), argue that social movements are an extension of institutionalised actions that have restricted focus to movements of institutional change that attempt to alter elements of social structure. They state that the new approach depends on political, economic and sociological theories rather than the social psychology of collective behaviour. They further argue,

The resource mobilisation approach emphasises both societal support and constraint of social movement phenomena. It examines the variety of resources that must be mobilised, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements.

(McCarthy & Zald 1977: 1213)

In the cyberconflict framework, Karatzogianni (2006) specifically uses RMT and NSM theories to understand the emergence, development and outcome of social movements by addressing the effects of ICTs and social media on mobilisation structures, political opportunity structures and framing process. This framework is essentially rooted in the

consideration of how ICTs are used as both resource and weapon in online and offline propaganda, either by the state or by political protest movements (Karatzogianni 2012). The majority of social and political groups use ICTs and social media as tools and employ them as resources to facilitate their activities and that is why Karatzogianni (2006) has used this framework to understand the use of digital technologies in the context of social and political activism (Olabs 2015).

A large body of literature aims to describe the relationship between ICTs and social movements (Ayres 1999; Cammaerts 2005; Diani 2000; Garrett 2006; Orchard 2004; Rheingold 2002; Ronfeldt & Arquilla 2001; Scott & Street 2000). However, such descriptions and frameworks often fall short in their analysis as they were created in the pre-Web 2.0 era (Mora 2014). New ICTs have a huge influence in the development of sociopolitical movements and there is a need to think about if Internet mediated activism can be considered as a new model of participation or analytical structures need to be proposed in order to understand these new developments (Mora 2014). In 2002, Howard Rheingold coined the term 'smart mob' to describe a group of people who could come together and cooperate in ways never possible before because they carried with them devices that had both communication and computing abilities. The mobile phones carried by people not only connected them to other information devices in the environment but also other people (Rheingold 2002).

At the same time Ronfeldt & Arquilla (2001), started talking about the concept of 'netwars' where decentralised organisations used the same combination of social networks and sophisticated communication technologies to start a new kind of political activism. They maintained that netwar was the emerging mode of conflict in which social and political actors, ranging from terrorists and criminal organisations on one side and social activists on the other, used network forms of organisation, doctrine, strategy, and technology attuned to the information age (Ronfeldt & Arquilla 1 October 2001). They state that, 'the practice of netwar is well ahead of theory, as both civil and uncivil society actors are increasingly engaging in this new way of fighting' (Ronfeldt & Arquilla 1 October 2001)

ICTs, mobile phones and other online media platforms have been considered as important resources helping in generating mobilisation, solidarity and collective action in contemporary social movements (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011). The affordability, speed and mobility offered by such technologies make them efficient tools for social and political protests. Garrett (2006) argues that ICTs have the potential to alter the flow of political information, reduce the cost of conventional forms of participation as well as create new low cost forms of participation, which can ultimately lead to an increase in participation in social movements. Bonchek (1997) agrees with this view and states that new low cost mediums of communication offered by the Internet, mobile phones and social media has helped in the increase of participation levels by facilitating member recruitment by increasing the benefits associated with participation.

ICTs have not only increased participation but also aided civil society actors and activists to participate in advocacy and generate collective action (Shirky 2010). The access to modern ICTs have greatly enhanced the capabilities to organise and participate in social movements (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011). This has been especially evident in case of the Arab Spring uprisings. ICTs and social media provided the protestors with an alternative platform to organise, mobilise and also to tell their story to the rest of the world. One of the protestors on talking about their experience in Egypt tweeted that, 'We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world' (Howard 23 February 2011). This is not only unique to Egypt but also true in the case of many other uprisings across the world, including India.

There is a wide range of literature that speaks about the use of ICTs and social media for dissent activities (Ayres 1999; Cammaerts 2005; Diani 2000; Garrett 2006; Orchard 2004; Rheingold 2002; Ronfeldt & Arquilla 2001; Scott & Street 2000). However, very few scholars have pointed out precisely to what extent social media has been used successfully, or has the potential to be used successfully, in the context of digital activism. In this context Chebib & Sohail (2011), say that social media has been used successfully in many social movements and their main purpose has been to facilitate in organising movements and holding discussions. However, they maintain that social media in itself cannot be termed a 'trigger' for a revolution. It is also to be noted that, just as ICTs have given power to the activists, new technologies have also given the

state increased power of surveillance and censorship. Belarus, China, Azerbaijan, Egypt, India are all examples when state censored the uses of mobile networks and social media sites under circumstances it deems politically necessary (Olabs 2015).

In the following section I build the theoretical framework for this research by highlighting existing literature on ICTs, social movements and digital activism. McAdam et al. (1996), explain the emergence, development and outcome of social movements by considering three interrelated factors: mobilisation structures, opportunity structures and framing processes. Even though this framework was created by McAdam, et al. (1996) in the pre-social media era, Garrett (2006) has based her framework using the same parameters and further extended it by looking at all three interrelated factors (mobilisation structures, opportunity structures and framing processes) suggested by them through the lens of digital activism.

In devising the cyberconflict framework Karatzogianni (2006) also uses these same parameters to analyse the influence of digital technologies on social movement. However, she further extends it by combining it with media theory and conflict theory in order to get a more complete understanding of the impacts of ICTs on conflicts and contentious movements across the globe. This integrated model is particularly suitable for understanding gender activism in India and hence this has been considered as the primary theoretical framework that guides further analysis for this research. The framework lays out the following parameters to be looked at while analysing cyberconflicts: 1. Environments of conflicts and conflict mapping (real and virtual) 2. Sociopolitical cyberconflicts (mobilisation structure, political opportunity structure, framing process) 3. Ethnoreligious cyberconflicts (ethnic religious affiliation, chauvinism, discourses of inclusion and exclusion) 4. The Internet as a medium/media theory (Karatzogianni 2006).

Unlike other models the cyberconflict framework explores both sociopolitical movements and ethnoreligious movements. However, in case of this research, only the characteristics of sociopolitical activism have been taken into consideration. The remaining chapter has been structured in relation to the cyberconflict framework and divided into three sections: social movement theory (mobilising structures, political

opportunity structures, framing process), media theory, conflict theory (gender and social movements). In order for this framework to be more inclusive and suitable for the analysis of the use of ICTs for gender activism, I have further extended it by looking at it through the lens of gender. Hence, in this chapter, I have also looked to critically analyse the relation between women's organising and social movements by examining theories on gender.

1.2 Social Movement Theory

In the cyberconflict framework, Karatzogianni (2006) specifically uses social movement theories to understand the emergence, development and outcome of social movements by addressing the effects of ICTs and social media on mobilisation structures, political opportunity structure and framing process. In the following section, I aim to elaborate on these three interrelated factors in order to develop a critical understanding of the nature of use and impact of ICTs in the context of sociopolitical activism. This section is of great importance in forming the basis of analysis for this research and help in answering questions related to participation, recruitment, leadership, mobilisation structure, collective action, opportunity structures and framing processes, whilst also analysing the Nirbhaya rape case that has been considered as a primary case study for this research.

1.2.1 Mobilisation Structure

Mobilisation structure refers to the processes by which a system is created to facilitate the contentious activities in a political situation (Olabs 2015). McCarthy (1996) defines mobilisation structures as the mechanism that enables individuals and groups to organise and engage in collective action. He states that mobilisation structures are 'agreed upon ways of engaging in collective action which include particular 'tactical repertoires', particular 'social movement organisational' forms and 'modular social movement repertoires'' (McCarthy 1996: 141). Mobilisation is an integral part of any movement and it involves preparing and carrying out protest actions. Active participants in a movement are usually networks of groups and organisations that mobilise and

protest to promote or resist social change, which is the ultimate goal of a social movement. The open, decentralised, non-hierarchical structures of new social movements make them ideal for Internet communication (Karatzogianni 2006: 59). Garrett (2006) divides mobilisation structure into two categories: social structures and tactical repertoires.

Social Structures

Garrett (2007) states that social structures ‘encompass both formal configurations, such as social movement organisations or churches, and informal configurations, such as friendship and activist networks’ (Garrett 2007: 203). Ronfeldt & Arquilla (2001) defines collective identity as the perception among individuals that they belong to a larger community by virtue of the grievances that they share. In traditional theories the study of collective behaviour did not include the study of the social movement itself, but the system’s sources of disequilibrium that led to the collective actions (Ronfeldt & Arquilla 2001).

The solidarity model/breakdown model can also be used to explain popular participation in social movements. According to Tilly (1980), there are two reasons for why social integration or social solidarity facilitates mobilisation. Firstly, social solidarity provides people with a communal goal and a set of common values, around which they can mobilise, a communication network and a structure of authority. Thus, solidarity theorists agree that unless the above factors are present, mobilisation is unlikely to take place (Tilly 1980). Secondly, solidarity makes bloc mobilisation possible. Social movements can expand in two ways, either by recruiting individuals or by recruiting an entire bloc of previously mobilised people. According to Ussem (1980), ‘mobilisation is made much easier when on-going movements are able to draw previously established groups into their organisation’ (Ussem 1980: 357). Bloc mobilisation is an important concept to consider in the Nirbhaya case as large scale mobilisation would not be possible without the existence of solidarity and commitment within the community. Previously established groups of activists and students formed an integral part of the Nirbhaya protests (See Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

Breakdown theory on the other hand focuses on social isolation. The 'mass society' version of the breakdown model states that an individual is most likely to join a movement when they are detached and have a weak sense of identification with the community (Snow et al. 1998). Unlike the solidarity model, mass society theorists have argued that participating in secondary organisations, like fraternal groups and political clubs actually prevent people from participating in social movements (Useem 1980). The 'discontent model' of the breakdown theory states that there needs to be a certain level of discontent within the community that explains their participation in social movements and people who share strong attachments within the community are normally insufficiently discontented to participate in social movements (Useem 1980).

Mobilising structures can vary from better-organised social movement organisations (SMOs) to the informal structures of everyday life. In the longer run, collective action may change the structures of everyday life. However, in the shorter run these structures are relatively fixed and serve as the relational underpinning for most collective action (McCarthy 1996). McCarthy (1996) further states that, at the least organised end of the map of social movement participation are families and networks of friends. A wide range of local dissent is built upon the structures of everyday life. Kinship and friendship networks have been central to the understanding of movement recruitment as well as understanding the formation of emergent local movement groups (McCarthy 1996). In this context, Buechler (1990) argues that the success of a social movement may depend on whether they can achieve a balance between SMO and social movement communities (SMC) activities in the pursuit of their goals. He argues,

The social movement community... is a parallel to an SMO in that both concepts refer to groups that identify their goals with the preferences of a social movement and attempt to implement those goals. Whereas the SMO does so by recourse to formal, complex organisational structures, however, the SMC does so through informal networks of politicised individuals with fluid boundaries, flexible leadership structures, and malleable divisions of labour. With the addition of this concept, SMI's may now be defined as consisting of all the

SMOs and SMCs that are actively seeking to implement the preference structures of a given Social Movement.

(Buechler 1990: 42)

In the Nirbhaya case, the roles played by the informal structures of everyday life have been widely linked to movement mobilisation, where informal and less formal ties between people served as solidarity and a structure to facilitate communication (See Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

When looking at new social movements, an extensive participation by the middle class can be observed. This middle class ‘participation revolution’ is rooted in deep post-materialist values, emphasising direct participation and a moral concern toward the plight of others (Karatzogianni 2006: 54). NSM theorists argue that middle class forms the chief participants of NSMs since neither they are bound by any corporate profit motives nor are they dependant on the corporate world for their sustenance. They tend to be highly educated and work in academia, arts or human service agencies (Pichardo 1997). In this context Eder (1985) states that the struggle to overcome a fear of non-realisation of universal moral concepts such as justice, peace or the good life is the reason for collective protest where ‘the petit bourgeois fills the role which is rehearsed throughout history: it plays the role of a guardian of the moral virtues of modernity, a role which it has learned how to play since its birth’ (Eder 1985: 889). The protests after the Nirbhaya case has often been called the movement of the educated middle class or the ‘new middle class’ for the more educated and privileged sections of generally less privileged groups. However, even though the main participants and the leaders were from the urban educated middle class, it also saw the participation of large numbers of people from rural Indian and urban slums (See Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

According to Garrett (2006), ICTs have helped in the promotion of collective identity across a dispersed population by virtue of the grievances they share. Developing a sense

of community is essential to generate participation and without which some participants would refrain from participating in contentious activities. In connection with mobilisation structures, it is interesting to observe the similarities online communities share with their 'real-life' counterparts. Online communities have helped establish strong ties of community within existing social networks, whilst simultaneously giving the opportunity to connect with groups and individuals who hold different views. In the physical world, communities are formed by a group of people who are bound together by some common identity or common intent, a trait shared by online communities. Bowler (2010) states that, 'this shared interest or intent offers a strong forum for members of the community to build relationships and affiliations out of which they can learn from one another and make an impact on the society or culture around them' (Bowler 2010: 2).

Kozinet (2010) distinguishes between the four idealised member types of an online community. He states that the first type are the 'newbies,' who relatively lack in abilities and skill. They lack strong ties to the community and maintain only superficial or passing interest in the consumption activity. The next group of individuals are the 'minglers' which he describes as the 'fraternisers' or the 'socialisers' who maintain a strong personal tie with the members of the group but are only superficially interested in the central consumption activity. The third group of individuals are the 'devotees' who have well defined skills and knowledge. They maintain relatively shallow social ties with the other members of the community but are greatly interested in the core consumption activity. The last group, the 'insiders', not only maintain strong social ties with the members of the community but also have deep identification with, aptitude in, and understanding of the core consumption activity (Kozinets 2010: 53).

Two actors in an online community can either be bound by a single relationship or by multiple relationships. Multiple relationships can be maintained through forums and media and these relationships can be more supportive, long-lasting, voluntary and intimate. Online community and networks can help develop weak ties into strong ones or even develop strong ties between two strangers (Kozinets 2010). Bonchek (1995) also states that in some cases ICTs have helped in bringing together members of a dispersed population close together to form virtual community where members are engaged and prepared to take action.

Identities formed within the movement are often not limited to the movement itself and extend beyond it (Polletta & Jasper 2001). The formation of women's caucuses, centres, programs, and support groups within mainstream legal, medical, economic, religious, and military institutions can be stated as an enduring outcome of the women's movement. Thus, as Polletta and Jasper (2001) states, 'rather than viewing collective identity exclusively as a kind of cultural movement impact, separated from the domain of institutional impacts like legal reform and policy change, these analyses point to the ways in which newly prominent or reformulated identities can transform the institutional political playing field' (Polletta & Jasper 2001: 297). This is very relevant in case of the Nirbhaya movement as identities formed and nurtured within the movement had a spill over effect from one movement to another taking forward the gender movement in India (See Chapter 5: Nirbhaya and Beyond- Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India).

Tactical Repertoires

Garrett (2007) describes tactical repertoires as 'forms of protest and collective action that activists are familiar with and able to utilise. Thus, supporters are more likely to mobilise around an issue if there is an existing organisational infrastructure and familiar forms of protests' (Garrett 2007: 204). Mobilisation is the process by which a group secures collective control of resources required for collective action. Therefore it must be taken into consideration how these resources that contribute towards social change are collected and to what extent is the movement dependant on outside support for resources. This knowledge is essential in order to determine how resources were collected, used and how collective action was generated while analysing the Nirbhaya case (see Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

Freeman (1979), distinguishes between tangible assets such as money, facilities and means of communications from intangible or human assets, which form the central part of the movement. Traditionally it has been believed that the direct beneficiaries of the

social change come from non-institutionalised resources. However McCarthy & Zald (1977) have argued that the movements of the 1960s and the 1970s not only obtain resources for the conscious constituency of an affluent middle class but also from institutional resources like welfare organisation, universities, mass media, private foundations, government agencies and even business corporations. Jenkins (1983) argues,

Social movements have therefore shifted from classical social movement organisations (or classical SMOs) with indigenous leadership, volunteer staff, extensive membership, resources from direct beneficiaries, and actions based on mass participation, towards professional social movement organisations (or professional SMOs) with outside leadership, full time paid staff, small or non-existent membership, resources from conscience constituencies, and actions that ‘speak for’ rather than involve an aggrieved group.

(Jenkins 1983:533)

On the other hand, Olson (1965) states the difficulties of movements being mobilised around collective material benefits and free-riding being a major point of concern (Olsen 1965 cited in Morris & Muller 1992). He states that mobilisation is only possible if distinct divisible benefits are offered to the group and the group is sufficiently small that the benefits of the individual is greater than cost required to accumulate the collective goods. There have been several arguments against Olsen’s hypothesis. It has been observed that in certain instances the movement actors act in terms of internalised values as well as self-interest (Morris & Muller 1992). Thereby, the main task of the mobilisation process is to generate solidarity and commitment in the name of the movement and groups that are motivated by ideological commitment, sharing strong interpersonal networks and a distinct identity tend to be more effective and readily be mobilised.

Evan and Boyte (1986) state that solidarity has been used to get people together for a movement and describe a ‘free space’ in which people can develop counter-hegemonic ideas and oppositional identities (Evans & Boyte 1986). Opposing Olsen’s theory of

‘free riding’, Evans & Boyte (1986) have argued about the existence of previous bonds making solidarity behaviour a reasonable expectation. Zald & McCarthy (1979) also accept this view and state that when a person is closely linked to a group through various shared ties of friendship, kinship, organisational membership, informal support networks, or shared relations with outsiders, they play a crucial role in the activities of the group. The participants in a movement are thus not isolated individuals but connected by effective bonds with other members of the group. Melucci (1995) in this context further states that a social movement grows as it develops an understanding of the environment, including opportunities and constraints, and conflicts forms the basis for consolidation of group identity and solidarity rather than shared interests (Melucci 1995). A large section of the participants in the Nirbhaya protests shared ties of friendship, kinship or organisational membership. Thus when collective action was urgent, these individuals were likely to contribute his or her share even if the impact of that share was not noticeable (See Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

In this context Oberschall (1973) argues that since social movements cater to the collective needs of community, very few individuals on their own would bear the costs of achieving the interests of the movement. Explaining collective behaviour requires detailed attention to the selection of incentives, cost-reducing mechanisms or structures, and career benefits that lead to collective behaviour (Oberschall 1973). These are essential for the success of social movements. McCarthy and Zald (1979), argue that collection of resources is central to social movement activity and resources must be aggregated in an organisational manner by SMOs for collective purposes in order to successfully engage in social conflict. In order to account for the success of a movement it is of prime importance to involve individuals and organisations who are outside of the collective. They continue that sometimes a crude supply and demand model is applied to the flow of resources toward and away from specific social movements and there is a certain degree of sensitivity to the importance of costs and rewards in order to explain an individual and organisational involvement in social movement activity (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Thus, costs and rewards are centrally affected by the structure of society and activities of authorities.

McCarthy and Zald (1977) also take a different view on the structure of movements and argue for an entrepreneurial theory of movement formation, in which the major factor is the availability of resources, especially cadres and organising facilities. Thus, if the goals of the movement are linked to a broad, diffuse, disorganised collective like middle-class consumers or the general public, they are unlikely to participate without the initiative of entrepreneurs. In many cases, after being cadres in deprived movements like student movements or civil rights movements, many entrepreneurs have branched out. Such movements have few resources, minimal political experience, and little prior organisation, which makes outside organisers critical of the formation of a movement. Cadre diversification also played a major part in the launch of several movements among less deprived groups like the women's liberation movement (Jenkins 1983). According to McCarthy and Zald (1977), entrepreneurs are more successful when they explore major interest cleavages and try to redefine long-term grievances in new terms. Increase in opportunities for cohesive aggrieved groups can lead to the formation of new movements. According to Jenkins (1983), 'In general, the formation of movements is linked to improvements in the status of aggrieved groups, not because of grievances created by the 'revolution of rising expectations' but because these changes reduce the costs of mobilisation and improve the likelihood of success' (Jenkins 1983: 532). In case of gender movements in India, organisations following an entrepreneurial model have been extremely successful in collecting resources. Many new non-profits prefer to operate their organisations like a business, pay suitable salaries and ensure employee satisfaction in order to motivate employee to do their work and also find new and innovative ways to continue their activism (See Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

Collective identity has played a major role in answering different questions related to the emergence, trajectories and impacts of the social movements. Polletta & Jasper (2001) have defined collective identity as 'individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity' (Polletta & Jasper 2001: 285). However, according to Snow (2001) there is no consensual definition of collective identity. However, one of the most systematic and comprehensive theories on collective identity was developed by Melucci

and that several other scholars have based their definitions of collective identity on his theories (Flesher Fominaya 2010).

Melucci (1995) defines collective identity as, ‘this process of ‘constructing’ an action system. Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level) and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place’ (Melucci 1995: 44). He further argues collective identity to be a process that involves cognitive definitions related to the end, means and the field of action. These different elements of collective identity are then defined in the same language that it is shared by the group and incorporated in a given set of rituals, beliefs and practices. However, he rejects the idea that collective identity is something that is given and argues that the empirical unity of a social movement should be considered as a result, rather than as a starting point. Hence, in order to understand the development of collective identity, social movements cannot be solely analysed as an already constituted collection of actors but there is a need to understand how it turned into a movement (Flesher Fominaya 2010).

Melucci (1995) further states that this cognitive framework is not necessarily coherent or unified. They are shaped through interactions which can give rise to different even contradictory definitions. This is important to remember because this means that actors do not always have to be in complete agreement about the ideologies, beliefs, interests and goals of the larger movement in order to generate collective action, which is quite contradictory to the common understanding of collective identity (Flesher Fominaya 2010). This is also important because this same trend of conflicting ideologies and beliefs was witnessed in the Nirbhaya case, even though the movement was able to bring thousands of people together (see Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

In the context of collective identity Chong (1991) argues that self-interested reputational concerns motivate the formation of loyalties. Friedman & McAdam (1992), argues about a fused perspective between loyalties and incentive. They state that any potential

participant in a social movement is a rational actor who is deeply involved in networks. However, it is important to remember that each of these participants have a choice and any theory on collective action must address the variation in participation levels over the entire life span of a movement (Friedman & McAdam 1992). Polletta & Jasper (2001) in this particular context states that,

Activism for many people is a way to construct a desirable self. They decide to participate neither primarily on a quasi-quantitative calculating of costs and benefits, as in the rational choice approach to politics, nor on altruistic impulses.... Rather, identity construction points to the qualitative concerns and the desires activists have that certain qualities be instantiated in their actions and lives.

(Polletta & Jasper 2001: 290)

Thus, lacking the connection to unifying ideological traditions like the revolutionary left or religious radicalism, post-1960s activists turned instead to a personalised politics in which the individual self was the arbiter of moral choices. However, collective identity is not always necessary for mobilisation. Sometimes, the political activities of the group provide the required solidarity. In this case the movement identity serves the same purpose as the pre-existing collective identity (Polletta & Jasper 2001).

Melucci (1995) also argues about the importance of culture in the formation of collective identities He states that, 'the autonomous ability to produce and to recognise the collective reality as a 'we' is a paradoxical situation: in affirming its difference from the rest of the society, a movement also states its belonging to the shared culture of a society and its need to be recognised as a social actor' (Melucci 1995: 48). Flesher Fominaya (2010) agree with this view and state that scholars focus on more 'structural, rationalistic and goal-driven explanations for the emergence and persistence of movements' leaving out crucial social-psychological, emotional and cultural factors which are of utmost importance (Flesher Fominaya 2010: 393). Emotions and affective ties also play an important role in the formation of collective identity (Hunt & Benford

2004). Flesher Fominaya (2007) further argues that positive emotional experiences of participation within a social movement environment can keep activists motivated even when the movement suffers a setback, whereas a hostile environment can discourage the participation of the activist even when they have strong commitment ties to the cause. Melucci (1995) also agrees with the view and emphasises the importance of emotional involvement of the activists in order to develop active relationships within a network that will further help in the development of collective identity.

Despite the vast literature on collective identity, very few studies have evaluated the relationship between collective action and the use of ICTs (Flesher Fominaya 2016b). Development of collective identity on a group level is dependent on internal processes that help in the development of shared belonging, trusts and commitment to common goals and actions that further help in nurturing internal group cohesion and commitment over time. Communications plays a crucial role in building this solidarity and other key components of collective identity process (Flesher Fominaya 2016b). ICTs tend to alter the flow of political participation, to reduce costs of conventional forms of participation and also create new low cost forms of participation ultimately resulting in a considerable increase in the participation process (Garrett 2006). By reducing costs related to communication, coordination and access of information, new ICTs have opened up various new channels for participation resulting in the facilitation of the member recruitment process by increasing benefits associated with participation (Bonchek 1995). In the Nirbhaya protests, ICTs helped in creating an environment where information was easily available and accessible. Allowing individuals to have easy access to relevant information when they were most receptive also helped in the process of information absorption.

Diani (2000) states that the impacts of ICTs on communities are largely dependent on the nature of the social movement organisations (SMOs). SMOs can be defined as, ‘a complex, or formal organisation which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or countermovement and attempts to implement these goals’ (Zald & McCarthy 1980: 2). According to Diani (2000), SMOs that are mainly focused on the mobilisation of professional resources are likely to see the conversion of their dispersed community of sympathisers into virtual communities with a higher degree of

interaction. ICTs also allow ordinary members to interact more effectively and efficiently, allowing them the opportunity for increased participation in organisational debates and decisions strengthening their identification with the movement. Thus as Garrett (2006) states, having contributed something towards the cause, the individuals are likely to develop stronger commitment and will be keener to contribute when action is required. Again SMOs that mobilise mainly participatory resources are largely dependent on local branches and other types of organisational infrastructure including associations and informal networks operating as 'transmovement free spaces' (Diani 2000: 9). Diani (2000) further argues that the cost-effectiveness and speed induced by ICTs has made transnational activism more effective and less cumbersome.

In India, ICTs have helped to strengthen existing relationships and expand ways in which participants can communicate and contribute. ICTs have played a major role in SMOs that work on a transnational level helping them develop crucial connections and collaborate with other organisations across geographically dispersed locations (See Chapter 5: Nirbhaya and Beyond- Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India).

Garrett (2006: 211) state that ICTs have helped in the adoption of horizontal, decentralised, non-hierarchical organisational forms and have made 'movement-entrepreneur-led activism' more feasible. Earl & Schussman (2003) also discuss the rise of movement entrepreneurs, which will increase the participation of individuals in the Internet-based movements as ICTs reduce the incentives to form SMOs. They argue that movement entrepreneurs are individuals who take part in social movement activities based on their own grievances and rely on their own set of skills in order to conduct their actions (Earl & Schussman 2003). Hyperlinked communication networks allow individuals to find multiple points of entry into various political actions. Bennett (2003) argues that with the emergence of ICTs, individual narratives in many cases have replaced the collective identity. He argues that, 'through this process, personal identity narratives replace collective social scripts as the bases for social order. These narratives become interpersonal linkages as network organisation begins to displace hierarchical institutions as primary membership and social recognition systems for individuals' (Bennett 2003: 7). One of the most remarkable aspects of the Nirbhaya movement was the participation of the individual. Social media played a big role in bringing together individuals from different sections of society and united them under the same cause.

The participation of individuals has also created a big shift in the nature and content of gender activism in India (See Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

The Internet has offered new and interesting opportunities for people to organise and mobilise. De Wilde *et al.* (2003) explains how organisations and the Internet can mutually benefit from each other for further development. They argue that, ‘the Internet provokes innovation, but this innovation has to be organised and disseminated. NGOs are especially innovative in this field: not only has the Internet helped these organisations, NGOs were also very important for the further development of the Internet’ (De Wilde *et al.* 2003 in Van De Donk *et al.* 2004: 5). Large political organisations that are rich in resources use ICTs mainly to enhance internal or external communication and reduce cost. However, relatively new, small and resource-poor organisations tend to reject traditional politics and in many ways are defined by their online presence (Meikle & Young 2012). In India, ICTs have provided smaller organisations and even individuals the resources to participate equally in the process of activism along with larger organisations (See Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

1.2.2 Political Opportunity Structures

According to Garrett (2006), political opportunity structures can be defined as attributes of a social system that facilitate or constrain movement activity. They shape the environment in which activists operate and that must be taken into consideration when crafting their actions. McAdam (1996) suggests four dimensions of the political opportunity structure that must be considered, which includes relative accessibility of the political system, the stable or fragmented alignments among the elites, the presence of elite allies, and the states tendency and capacity to repress the movement (McAdam 1996). Cultural and organisational factors are often included in the conceptual schemes of political opportunity so that collective actors can create as well as frame new opportunities for mobilisation purposes (Ayres 1999).

In discussing the relationship between ICTs and opportunity structures, Ayres (1999) states that ICTs, in combination with the global economic processes, result in contentious activities becoming increasingly transnational which in turn affects national level opportunity structures. On the other hand, it also results in the emergence of new avenues of transnational opportunity structures for collective action. He argues, 'the Internet contributes to this internationalisation of contentious activity... In effect, the Internet has become an international opportunity in its own right, as it provides disparate groups around the world with a means for collectively contesting new and emerging global arrangements' (Ayres 1999: 136). New ICTs allow the free flow of communication and information which to a great extent is resistant to state regulations thus limiting the capabilities of the state to repress social movements (Garrett 2006).

The other important factor to discuss in terms of political opportunity structures are the cycles of protest. Multiple movements emerge within the cycles of protest and they have been explained using the concepts of political opportunity structure (Staggenborg 1998). In the cycles of protest, multiple movements arise because activists believe that the political climate of the time would be receptive to their demands. According to Staggenborg (1998), 'movements that are 'early risers' demonstrate to later movements that the political system is vulnerable thereby encouraging the spread of protest by new groups' (Staggenborg 1998: 180).

Meyer & Tarrow (1998) use the political process model to understand the development and the outcome of the cycles of protest. Hipsher (1998) states three factors that can create the political opportunity favourable for the emergence of the cycles of protest. Firstly, transitional political systems, by their very nature, have encouraged the emergence of political movements. In case of democratic transitions, the initial upsurge of political protests coupled with the change in political opportunity would lead to a massive wave or cycle of protest (Tarrow 1998). Secondly, the acquisition of valuable and influential allies has also encouraged movement development. Finally, divisions or conflicts within political regimes have been a key factor for the emergence of social protest (Hipsher 1998). However, O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) argue that the 'resurrection of civil society' will not take place until the cost of collective action is

lowered and some amount of contestation is allowed by the political regime (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986 cited in Hipsher 1998: 155).

Even though political opportunity plays a central role in the process of emergence of protests cycles, many scholars argued that mobilisation structures, collective identity and cultural factors also play a huge role in the emergence and sustenance to protest cycles (Staggenborg, 1998). McAdam (1995) explains that the 'initiator' movements can be a response to the political opportunity structures but later spin-off' movements are influenced by the cultural effects of the previous movements and not by political opportunity. He also states that social movements are not solely tied to organisations and he has attached to it a wide range of cultural components. Staggenborg (1998) argues that it is important to remember that some movements can be initiated by the culture of protest cycles and not always a direct result of the political opportunity. This is especially true when looking at the other gender movements that followed the Nirbhaya movement. Thus, in order to understand the process of growth of a social movement and in broader terms the social movement cycles, it is important to understand how mobilising structures emerge and evolve, how they are chosen, combined and adapted by social movement activists, how they differentially affect particular movements as well as movement cycle trajectories.

In terms of culture, it is also important to take into consideration the concept of political fields. Bourdieu & Thompson (1991) define political fields as a sphere of not only dominant political powers but also for competing discourses encompassing a wide range of positions including the dominant order and the ones that challenge them. Political field can be understood as of both 'fields of forces' and 'fields of struggles' which aims for the transformation of the forces and their relations, which confer on the field its structure (Bourdieu & Thompson 1991: 171). Thus political fields can be defined as unequal, structured and socially constructed environments within which organisations are embedded and to which organisations and activists constantly respond. Roy (1999) argues that organisations are autonomous entities but they inherit a field and its social relations and when the organisations act, they act both in response to the field and within the field. Culture can have a great effect on a social movement organisation (SMO) and it forms an integral part of the organisation's political opportunity structure

(Meyer & Staggenborg 1996; Katzenstein 1989). The actors in a political field can include the state, political parties and SMOs. All the actors in a political field are connected to each other. Some might be the powerful forces and the other the dominant ones but they are all tied together by a particular culture (Roper 2005).

Roy (1999) defines the political culture as the ‘acceptable and legitimate way of doing politics in a given society, strongly influenced by but reducible to the complex web of class, gender, race, religion and other relations that order society’ (Roy 1999: 8). Just like political opportunity, political culture plays a great role in the emergence and sustenance of social movements. It can either become an enabler, creating possibilities for action or it can become a constraint, limiting the possibilities for the emergence and growth of a movement. Roy (1999) also talks about the four kinds of political fields. Firstly, a field that has homogenous political culture and a concentration of power can be called hegemonic. Secondly, a field that has heterogeneous culture but a dispersion of power can be called fragmented. Thirdly, a field with multiple cultures and a concentration of power can be called segmented. Finally, a field with a homogenous political culture but no dominant groups can be called pluralist. Social movements are deeply embedded with the political fields and these external factors greatly affect the dynamics of a social movement. Flesher Fominaya (2016a), states that national political cultures are important in shaping movement subcultures, though most activists are still very local and state centred in their political orientation, despite their commitment to global issues and cosmopolitanism. This difference in political field is extremely important to recognise in the context of this research as different states in India are characterised by different political fields and that can either encourage or constrain the formation and development of social movements in that particular region (see Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

1.2.3 Framing Process

The framing process has come to be regarded as a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of new social movements. The concept of framing can be derived from the works of Goffman (1974) in which he states that frames denote ‘schemata of

interpretation' enabling individuals 'to locate, perceive, identify, and label' occurrences within their life space and the world at large (Goffman 1974). Tarrow (1998) states that the management of the frames are crucial to collective action and the process of mobilisation. He further states that it is essential to build movements around strong ties of collective identity, whether it has been inherited or constructed as it would help in the process of mobilisation and lead to action, alliance and interaction (Tarrow 1998). According to Benford and Snow (2000) the verb framing denotes,

An active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process. It entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movement organisations or movement activists. And it is contentious in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretive frames that not only differ from existing ones but that may also challenge them. The resultant products of this framing activity are referred to as collective action frames.

(Benford & Snow 2000: 614)

Collective action frames can be treated as a set of beliefs and meanings that are action oriented and that legitimise and inspire the actions of the SMOs. Frames can be developed, generated and elaborated through three sets of overlapping processes: discursive, strategic and contested (Benford & Snow 2000). Karatzogianni (2006) states that the presence of shared goals and models facilitates mobilisation. This leads to the understanding that the framing process involves, (1) the cultural tool kits available to would-be insurgents; (2) the strategic framing efforts of movement groups; (3) the frame contests between movement and other collective actors – principally the state and countermovement groups; (4) the structure and role of the media in mediating such contests; and (5) the cultural impact of the movement in modifying the available toolkit (McAdam 1996: 19). In order for a social movement to grow and to be effective it is important for SMOs to frame the issue in such a way that it fits the understanding and experiences of at least some members of society (Benford & Snow 2000; Tarrow 1998). Thus social movements can be much more effective when the framing of the issues, the

attribution of blame and the suggestions of resolution and change are culturally resonant (Roy 1999).

It is also important to consider the diffusion process of the frames in order to determine how movement ideas, collective action frames and practices spread from one movement to another. According to Snow and Benford (2000), framing is most relevant to the diffusion process of social movements when either the transmitter or the adopter takes active role in the process. It can also take place when there is a problem of compatibility or similarity between transmitters and potential adopters are not clarified or need to be constructed. Strategic selection or adaptation and strategic fitting or accommodation are the two ideal types of social movement diffusion process in which ‘the objects of diffusion-whether cultural ideas, items, or practices-are framed so as to enhance the prospect of their resonance with the host or target culture’ (Benford & Snow 2000: 627). However, as Snow and Benford (1992) state, as the movement coalition grows it is important to continuously redefine the interpretive schemata to provide common meanings. A well-known model of contentious politics refers to the diffusion of protest networks and the accompanying transformation of collective identity as scale shift. According to this view, ‘scale shift depends on the existence of several mechanisms of human agency: brokerage (creating social links among disconnected sites of protest), diffusion (transfer of information across those links), and attribution of similarity (mutual identification)’ (Bennett 2003: 10).

Zald (1996) analyses the importance of strategic framing of grievances and injustice, their causes, motivations and the associated templates for collective action. The focus on framing has helped to reemphasise the central importance of ideas and the cultural elements in the understanding the mobilisation of participants in social movements and the framing of political opportunity. He defines frames as ‘the specific metaphors, symbolic representations and the cognitive cues used to render or cast behaviour and events in an evaluative mode and to suggest alternative modes of action’ (Zald 1996: 262). Frames help us identify, interpret and define problems for actions and suggested action pathways to remedy the problems. Frames are also constantly contested (Karatzogianni 2006). Within the Nirbhaya movement, frames were contested by the participants, the leaders, and activists in order to debate alternate goals and visions for

the movement. Externally the frames are contested by the countermovement actors like the bystanders and the state officials who oppose the movement.

Social movements are dependent on and draw upon a larger societal context. Societal and cultural norms dictate and define what is injustice and violation. Society and culture are not static and change with time. Thus the way people protest and mobilise also changes with time. Zald (1996) state that, 'contemporary framing of injustice and political goals almost always draw upon the largest societal definitions of relationships, rights, and responsibilities to highlight what is wrong with the current social order, and to suggest directions for change' (Zald 1996: 267). Snow and Benford (1992) argue that frames provide shorthand interpretations of the world, to locate blame and to suggest lines of action. Many movements provide a master frame, which later movements may draw upon. Social movements are not only influenced by the cultural stock but they also add to it. The frames of winning movements get translated into public policy, into slogans and symbols of general culture. Successful movements become examples and their frames are replicated by future movements providing training grounds and models (Zald 1996: 271). The Nirbhaya movement not only opened up the public discourse where gender gained a dominating position but also paved the way for other gender moments across the country. Nirbhaya inspired people from India and of Indian origin to think more critically about gender issues and provided them with ideas, symbols and narratives required to drive a movement forward (See Chapter 5: Nirbhaya and Beyond-Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India).

The framing process attempts to trace the narrative and ideologies that define a movement and in framing the ideologies that shape the movement, the flow of information is a necessary factor that must be taken into consideration (Benford & Snow 2000). In this case ICTs play a crucial role. According to Scott & Street (2000), one of the most important aspects of new ICTs is its ability to bypass mainstream media channels, which results in the avoidance of mass media filters and creation of content without any distractions or distortions. This also helps activists to shape the movement narratives and allows them to respond to and correct misconceptions on movement activities (Olabs 2015). Information posted online is available to view indefinitely which allows interested individuals to access that information at any point of time. ICTs

and social media were widely used by organisations and individuals in the protests after the Nirbhaya case and it was instrumental in constructing, and broadcasting their demands to a national and a global audience (see Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

1.3 Media Framework: Media, ICTs and Social Movements

New media and ICTs often have a huge influence in the development of sociopolitical movements and there is a need to think about if Internet mediated activism can be considered as a new model of participation or if analytical structures need to be proposed in order to understand these new developments (Mora 2014). On talking about the role of media and new ICTs in social movements, it is important to discuss the concept of ‘networked society’ as put forward by Manuel Castells (Castells 1996, 1997, 2004, 2007, 2011). Castells defines networked society as a ‘society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies’ (Castells 2004: 3). Thus a networked society lacks the presence of centres and is only held together by an interconnection of nodes. However, each of these nodes are characterised by varying degrees of importance, which depend on their ability to assimilate information. Technology has been considered as the core characteristic of networked society and Castells (1996) called the age of the digital communications as the age of informationalism. Monge and Contractor (2003) support his view and state that social networks are in the heart of developing communication networks.

Informationalism has taken the world towards a digital revolution and new technologies, especially the Internet and social media, have been considered as the most significant and direct expression of this revolution. According to Castells, ‘informationalism is a technological paradigm based on the augmentation of the human capacity of information processing and communication made possible by the revolutions in microelectronics, software, and genetic engineering’ (Castells 2004: 9). New digital technologies like the computer, hand-held computers, mobile phones and most importantly access to the Internet with one or more these devices has made

information more accessible to a wide section of people. Any one of these devices has the capacity to instantly connect a person to a hundred million other such devices that are scattered around the world and link to countless Internet servers (Mitchell 2003). Thus the development of these technologies has also led to the development of new forms of communication. Information and communication form the foundation of core social and organisational activities and a drastic change in the nature and availability of information and modes of communication has far reaching changes in society itself (Castells 2011a). The concept of networked society is especially important in the Indian context as online activism has encouraged the development of new connections and collaborations giving opportunities to Indian immigrants across the globe to participate in the gender activism in India (See Chapter 5: Nirbhaya and Beyond- Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India).

New ICTs have given rise to the information economy that has not only changed how people view and use information but it has also changed the ways in which people interact, work, consume and produce. It has challenged the traditional beliefs and institutional structures including economy, wealth creation and social development (Castells 2007). Technology has not only increased the speed of communication, but decreased the cost (Bonchek 1997). This has been reflected especially in the working of social movements, campaigners and activists. Now people can communicate their messages at an unprecedented speed and at an extremely low cost, it negates the presence of middle men. This makes the process of communication and mobilisation convenient and efficient (Karatzogianni 2006; Tapscott 1996).

This new concept of informationalism has also changed the way economic activities and the process of production takes place (Castells 2004). Historically, society was dominated by vertical organisations whose power was distributed in one directional flow of resources and information and this power was deeply embedded in the institution of society. Castells argue that, historically, the vertical-hierarchical organisations were superior to networks because networks had a huge range of difficulties that they had to overcome. These drawbacks were intrinsically related to available technologies (Castells 2004).

The advent of digital technologies has resulted in horizontal flow of communication, which was almost devoid of hierarchies as opposed to hierarchical structures, which relied on control and mechanical operations. Wellman & Hampton (1999) agree with this view and state that, 'trading and political blocs have lost their monolithic character in the world system. Organisations form complex networks of alliance and exchange rather than cartels and workers (especially professionals, technical workers and managers) report to multiple peers and superiors. Management by network is replacing management by (two-way matrix) as well as management by hierarchical trees' (Wellman & Hampton 1999: 648). Juris (2004) also supports this view and state that networks are increasingly associated with grassroots participatory democracy.

Castells (2004) also argues about the new global emerging economy. Davis (2002) agrees with this concept and states that Castells' (1996, 2004, 2011b) concepts of the 'new economy' or the 'global economy' definitely coincide with the concepts of globalisation. Woolgar (2004) also agrees with the globalisation aspect of the networked society. He states, 'globalisation is about the death of distance, and new technologies are claimed to be space defying, boundary crossing and ubiquitously linking' (Woolgar 2004: 133) Tapscott (1996) emphasises the importance of information in the networked society. The digital economy depends on information and knowledge as their key resources. This is true even of the organisations that still exist within local areas. Tapscott (1996) further believes that globalisation as a process is driven by new technologies that enable in the production of global action. That means that organisations and companies are not only multinational enterprises but they are also global enterprises (Tapscott 1996).

The idea of citizenship has evolved over time, but is still linked to the physical boundaries of the nation state. However, the increased effects of globalisation of the world economy, innovation in the world of communication technologies and transportation have resulted in a mobility and accessibility, both physical and virtual, that challenges the bounded notions of citizenship giving rise to concepts of the global civil society (Cammaerts 2005). Purkayastha (2012) agrees with this view and states that as the number of people in transnational spaces grows, their lives are affected by an intersection of global, regional and local in such a way that the concept of a single

national state cannot wholly contain their lives. Digital technologies form the core of the information age and it has powered social and organisational networks in such a way that there can be opportunities for endless expansion and reconfiguration that would not be possible within the limits of a traditional system. The networked society is not bound by the borders of the nation-state. It constitutes itself as a global system bringing in new forms of globalisation (Castells 2010). However, Edwards (2013) states that the concept of the global civil society is still at a nascent stage. He argues, ‘citizens from different countries are certainly speaking out on global issues, but the rights and responsibilities of citizens on a global level are still ill defined, especially in the absence of a global state or culture’ (Edwards 2013: 2). In the context of transnational gender movements in India, it is essential to discuss the concepts of citizenship and the blurring boundaries between the real and the virtual. In relation to the establishment of communication between USA and India, Adams & Ghose (2003) talk about the concept of the Bridgespace. Bridgespace is a space built in and through the Internet and this space is made up both Indian residents and non-resident Indians (NRIs) leading to a regular exchange of information and cultural values. Such ties are essential not only to generate solidarity but also to allow active engagement through contribution, borrowing and consumption.

Karatzogianni et al. (2013) in the MIGNET project analysed three case studies (Cyprus, Greece and UK) that involved intercultural conflict between migrants and the host society and also conflicts between migrants of different origin or culture, and intra-communal conflict. All these conflicts occur within the digital space and the project aimed to establish the role of digital networks in reinforcing actual practices of intercultural conflict. The results showed that in all three case studies online media was used both as sites and as tools for the conflicts. Intense virtual opposition emerged in the digital space where migrants responded to the offline political events. Further, the online dissent subsequently led to offline street protests. In Cyprus, the city became the site of contestation of the cultural and identity conflicts. In Greece the discourses of inclusion and exclusion and the participation of migrants in the public sphere was constantly contested leading to migrant having no agency in the public sphere. While studying the Russian-speaking post-Soviet Communities in the UK, the research concluded that being in the UK, participation in newly emerging social initiatives and

accepting social inclusion could turn Russian-speaking migrants into active agents of change (Karatzogianni et al. 2013).

The research further recommends that in the cases of Cyprus and Greece support must be given to migrants in organising themselves politically and to communicate their perspectives individually so that voices can be heard. They further recommend that in all three cases appropriate support must be provided for the right grassroots networks and migrant organisations in order to stimulate intercultural dialogue and cooperation (Karatzogianni et al. 2013). This is important in order for migrants to not only participate in conflicts in their host countries but also participate in intercultural and transnational conflicts.

New ICTs are offering new and innovative opportunities for mobilising and organising individuals. Thus, ‘the space of the new social movements of the digital age is not a virtual space, it is a composite of the space of flows and of the space of places’ (Castells 2007: 250). Movements that emerge locally can lead to physical mobilisation not only at the point of origination but can generate global interest and impact. It leads to the elimination of boundaries between the global and the local creating a new space for new social movements to act and flourish. In this context Castells (2007) states that,

Mass self-communication is, self-generated in content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception by many that communicate with many. We are indeed in a new communication realm, and ultimately in a new medium, whose backbone is made of computer networks, whose language is digital, and whose senders are globally distributed and globally interactive.

(Castells 2007: 248)

ICTs tend to have consequences for the ways in which social movements interact with their environment. ICTs could improve a movement’s capacity to act in a coordinated and coherent way in order to react more quickly to external challenges. It also helps organisations and movements to be less dependent on the established mass media in

conveying their messages to a broader audience base. The action and reaction follow each other in very short cycles, and the speed of diffusion of new ideas, tactics and arguments are considerably increased. ICTs also help to facilitate mobilisation across large territories to reach a wider audience and create an global impact (Van De Donk et al. 2004).

Throughout history, communication and information have been fundamental sources of power and counter-power, of domination and social change (Castells 2007). The role of media in the formation of a movement cannot be ignored. According to Castells (2007),

Communication, and particularly socialised communication, the one that exists in the public realm, provides the support for the social production of meaning, the battle of the human mind is largely played out in the processes of communication. And this is more so in the network society, characterised by the pervasiveness of communication networks in a multimodal hypertext.

(Castells 2007: 2)

Politics is based on socialised communication primarily in the form of media politics, where the working of the political system is staged for the media to gain public attention and to influence people's minds. Thus it can be stated that media has a considerable power over politics. But this power is bidirectional and politics has considerable power and control over media. What does not exist in the media does not exist in the public mind, even if they have a fragmented presence in individual minds. Thus making a political message essentially a media message (Castells 2007: 4).

Nelson (2011) argues that media representation, public perception and social movements are intrinsically related in order to create a dynamic relationship. Groups in a social movement are both senders and receivers of information making them responsible for both the acquisition and dissemination of information and knowledge (Hall 2006). Thus as Meikle & Young (2012) state, media is something that people 'do' and symbolic meaning is not only exercised in the creation and circulation of stories but

also in their reception and interpretation. Bourdieu (1991) states that media has the power to create reality. Thus, 'we read and believe, we hear and absorb, we see and are swayed' (Meikle & Young 2012: 109).

The way in which media is consumed by the audience can be described using Hall's encoding/decoding model. Hall (2006) states that the producers of media content encode certain meanings in the construction and presentation of stories. However, that meaning is decoded when the story is accepted by the audience and each member of the audience can decode the story in a different way. Hall (2006) also suggests that the users of media or media audience are likely to produce three broad kinds of possible meaning: a dominant one where the main message embedded in the story is largely accepted, a negotiated one, where an individual's interests and background comes into play producing a meaning, which is in some way qualified, and finally oppositional meaning where the main meaning and premise embedded in the story is largely rejected by the audience (Hall 2006).

The way people access, experience, evaluate and produce media differs from one individual to another making the media representation of actual events subjective (Semali 2003). Thus the media representation of social movements is extremely important in order to ensure the media message is aligned with the movement's official positions (Nelson 2011). According to Karatzogianni (2006), mass media and social movements have a lot in common. She states that, 'they both engage in the struggle for attention; they want to maximise their outreach; they are confronted, though to different degrees, with competitors. Nevertheless they only follow a different functional logic, but also have a strikingly asymmetrical relationship when dealing with each other' (Karatzogianni 2006: 68). Groups in movements that require media attention have to be careful as extreme action might bring them attention but can alienate them from the general masses. On the other hand, following a conventional path might lead to the movement being completely ignored especially in the age of 24 hours news channels and the breaking news syndrome. Thus, 'the media are not the holders of power, but they constitute by and large the space where power is decided' (Castells 2007: 5).

The diffusion of Internet, mobile communication, digital media, social media, has led to the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication, that include the multimodal exchange of interactive messages from many to many both synchronous and asynchronous, that connect global and local at a chosen time leading to the formation of a networked society (Karatzogianni 2006). Sharing of information has become extremely simple through SMS, blogs, vlogs, social media, RSS feeds, podcasts and other similar technologies and this has given people the counter power to challenge power relations institutionalised in society. This serves as an extraordinary medium for people and groups to build movements and gain interest and generate participation both locally and globally without the help of mainstream media sources. The spread of ICTs have also helped in giving a voice to those oppressed by dominant social structures thus giving rise to the emergence of alternative voices and points of view (Nelson 2011). In case of the Nirbhaya movement, role of media in the formation of the movement cannot be ignored. Media acted as an important tool to reach out to the general masses, to acquire their approval, to mobilise potential new participants and to link the movement with other political and social actors. Media provided huge psychological support required for the growth and the sustenance of a movement Nirbhaya movement (See Chapter 5: Nirbhaya and Beyond- Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India).

Regulation and policy in a convergent media environment is a topic that is the subject of regular debates. As a result of their networked architecture ICTs have a great ability to evade and bypass state regulations and surveillance techniques. However, governments have realised the power and potential of new media tools and they have developed considerable ability to exercise control over what is happening online on the Internet (Meikle & Young 2012). Questions about net neutrality have also been widely discussed. Net neutrality is the principle by which service providers must treat all content on the Internet the same way.

Activists have been rallying across the world against phone and cable monopolies that control the Internet access. Debates have ranged for the control of information to the control of bandwidth. In February 2015 activists celebrated as the Federal Communications Commission approved a plan to govern the Internet like a public

utility to prevent cable companies to offer preferential access to those who prefer to pay more. The director of one the biggest net neutrality groups said, 'This is a victory of the Internet, by the Internet, and for the Internet' (Neate 27 February 2015). Net neutrality has also been an ongoing debate in India (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Socio-Political and Media Environment').

The concept of online surveillance should be looked at from two different points of view. In this context the concept of the Panopticon prison as written by Foucault (1977) can be discussed. Panopticon is a uniquely designed prison where guards were stationed in a central watchtower, which was surrounded by well-lit prison cells. By virtue of the design of the prison, guards could monitor activities in the cell at all times but inmates would not know when they were being watched. This resulted in inmates self-regulating and censoring their behaviour. In the work of Foucault (1977), the idea of Panopticon is a reflection of the power dynamics that exist in society. In relation to the Internet this can be looked at in two different ways. Firstly, as Garrett (2006) states, the Panopticon metaphor is reversed online giving activists the opportunity to observe the elites and government bodies making them more aware of their actions and self-regulation. On the other hand, it also places power in the hands of the authorities to monitor dissent activities and leading to the curbing of social action. Thus as Meikle & Young (2012) state, mediated visibility is truly a 'double edged sword' (Meikle & Young 2012: 144). In the Indian context, while, media infrastructure is widely under-regulated, media content can very easily regulated. The government of India has implemented the IT Law to provide a legal framework from regulating the Internet. Thus, Internet censorship and monitoring online content is an issue that has been widely debated in the Indian context.

1.4 Gender, ICTs and Social Movements

In this section I have extended the cyberconflict framework by mainstreaming theories on gender in the social movement and media framework that have been discussed in the previous two sections. This section recognises gender as a key explanatory factor in both the social movement framework and the media framework and inclusion of gender in both the above frameworks can help us further our understanding about the

emergence, nature and outcome of social movements especially in a digital media environment. The following table shows us the cyberconflict framework where gender has not only been included as a separate category but also mainstreamed in all other theoretical discourses in order for the framework to be more sensitive of issues related to gender and to create a broader understanding of the relation between social movements, gender and ICTs. This table was designed after analysing the data obtained for this research the details of which has been explained in the next chapter (see Chapter 2: Methodology and Empirical Analysis).

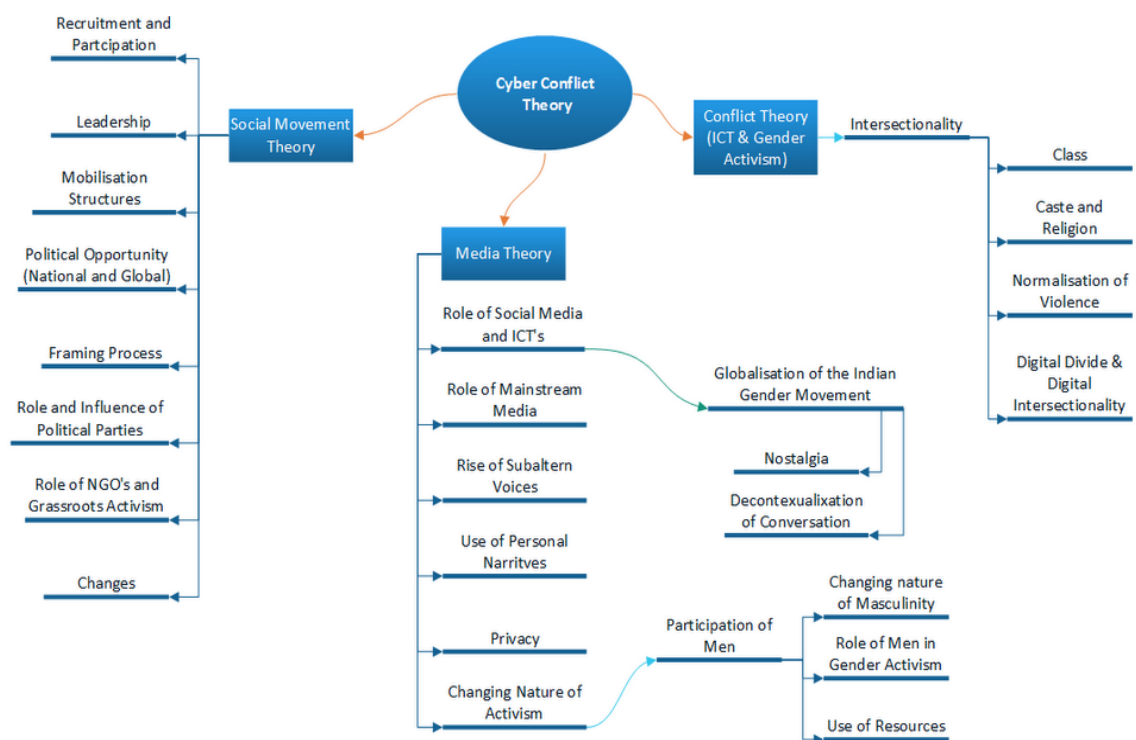


Figure 1: Cyberconflict Framework with Gender Components

1.4.1 Gender Component to the Cyberconflict Framework

Until recently, gender has rarely been considered as a major factor in the study of social movements and for the most part, mainstream social movement theories were developed and applied within the assumption of gender neutrality (West & Blumberg 1990). On the other hand, investigations on women in social movements in the 1970s and 80s

rarely incorporated social movement theories and focused mainly on making women's experience in social movements visible (Kuumba 2001). In order for actions around justice, democracy and equality to be successful it must include gender as an integral part of the analytical process in order to achieve more complete social transformations (Horn 2013). According to Motta et al. (2011),

Feminist theory, which developed out of and for women's activism, at times has been directly linked to and shaped by the dilemmas facing movement organising and at other times has represented a more distant and reflective form of thought. If many activists continue to find it useful in the development of their social critiques and the scrutiny of mobilised identities, the relationship of feminist theory to questions of movement organising is often less clear, as is what feminist theory can offer social movement analysis.

(Motta et al. 2011: 2)

Taylor (1999) states four reasons about the importance of including a gender perspective into the study of social movements. Firstly, gender hierarchy is partially created through organisational practices and gender is very much a part of the organisational principles of protest groups as it is of institutionalised ones. Secondly, the attention to gender is required to accurately understand mobilisation structures and collective action of any social movement. Thirdly, even if movements are directly not about gender, gender as a set of cultural beliefs and way of interacting plays a major role in the identity movements sweeping the political landscape. Finally, the synthesis of theories on gender and social movements will not only provide a better understanding of social movements but it also has the potential to advance the understanding of gender change processes by making explicit the role of social movements in the social construction and reconstruction of gender (Taylor 1999). Thus, this research aims to challenge the existing literature on digital activism and social movement that are developed from a gender neutral perspective and further develop a framework that can be used as a feminist mode of analysing social movements.

As discussed in the earlier section of this chapter (see 1.1 Social Movements and ICTs, 1.2 Social Movement Theory) mobilisation and collective action are two of the most important factors when it comes to the success of a social movement. In this case, it is important to remember that women and men experience the broader structural conditions that exist in society in very different ways. The social divisions that situate men and women in different positions within the social, economic, political system, community and family is also manifested in the mobilisation structures of a social movement (Kuumba 2001). Mobilisation opportunities generate distinct incentives, levels of participation and sites of engagement for men and women. The intersection of gender, race, ethnicity and class interact with patriarchal relations in ways that radicalise and mobilise women on different levels within a social movement (McAdam 1992). According to Motta et al. (2011), ‘ the relationship of activists to the notion of feminism is in some instances a result of the power of patriarchy; all struggles for social change, not just women’s movements, are highly gendered, often in hierarchical and damaging ways’ (Motta et al. 2011: 2).

Mobilisation structures are the sites of transmitting ideas, coordinating activities and attracting participants to the movement. These structures can be based on the informal ties of daily life or can be highly structured and formal. While some structures are based on centralised, top-down hierarchical leadership structures, others are more egalitarian, horizontal and dependent on collective leadership. There are several ways in which mobilisation structures display gender discriminations, hierarchies and asymmetries because the structures on which movement mobilisations are based are deeply embedded in the gendered nature of the social order. This distinction can start right from the recruitment level ranging to participation, levels of engagement and leadership structures. McAdam (1992) observed differential recruitment on the basis of gender and race in the Freedom Summer movement that was launched in 1964 in Mississippi in USA. He said that gender mediated every aspect of the experience and the experience of male and female volunteers were very different. Like many other social movements, in Freedom Summer, women were mostly given teaching or clerical roles, while on the other hand, men were involved in the political activism. Male members were also shown far more behavioural license and moral tolerance compared to their female counterparts (McAdam 1992).

The leadership structures of social movements also show a distinct gender divide. Kuumba (2001) states that a dichotomised logic can be used to describe the two groups of participants in social movements- the leaders and the followers. The leaders, who are predominantly male, represent the movement, and the followers are the workers who carry out the instructions of the leaders. Thus the narrative of social movements focuses on the leadership structures, and the faceless masses, who are disproportionately women, become invisible or blurred (Robnett 1996). It has also been said that women in the undefined areas of the movement actually are the main mobilisers that drive the movement forward. Thus as men lead the movements, women organise, establishing crucial links and relationships that would not only attract new participants but also form the glue that would hold the movement together (Barnett 1993; Robnett 1996). Women are also willing to take a radical stand and push their demands further because they had more to gain and little to lose (Kuumba 2001). In case of participation of women in social movements in India the same trend is also noticeable (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Socio-Political and Media Environment').

Chopra (1993) argues that the number of women in leadership positions in the local, village, district or national level social movements is very small and the effective participation of women will help in strengthening the institutional structures of democracy. Traditional power hierarchies are tilted in favour of men and resist giving space or recognition to women's attempts to be part of the political system. Further, the presence of women in local governance structures also does not ensure that the issues of concern of local women and social injustices are addressed because of various bureaucracies resulting in issues important to men being given precedence (UN Women & International Centre for Research on Women 2012). Often women's practical gender needs such as access to basic amenities which fall within their socially defined role are addressed. However, addressing these practical needs does not involve challenging women's status in society or focusing on achieving gender equity (UN Women & International Centre for Research on Women 2012). Even in case of India, very few approaches actually respond to women's strategic gender interests seeking to transform gender relations and change women's position in society rather than only improve their living condition.

Networks of kinship and family forms an integral part of the mobilisation structures in a social movement environment (McCarthy 1996). These informal structures are extremely important in creating lines of communication and bring new participants into the movement. Kuumba (2001) states that the position of women within the household and within the community allows them to establish valuable connections, which are essential to the success of social movements. Organisations like churches also formed an integral part of the mobilisation process. While male ministers are the official leaders, women form the majority of the supporters who work towards enhancing mobilisation and collective action. Similar trends have been noticed in India where men occupy the positions of leadership but it is often women who drive the movement forward through their connections and relationships within the community (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Socio-Political and Media Environment').

Political opportunity structures determine the emergence and the likelihood of success of a social movement (Ayres 1999). However, gendered critiques of the political opportunity state that gender as power relation contributes to the wider power relation (Noonan 1995). The shift in power structures within a society affects men and women differentially, which in turn affects the way men and women mobilise. Kuumba (2001) states that the concept of political opportunity needs to be expanded to include cultural factors that affect the participation and mobilisation of women. There are several factors in political opportunity including change of social status and growth of global gender movements that encourages the participation of more women in social movements.

Just as gendered norms affect the process of mobilisation and collective actions, it also affects the process of interpretation and awareness within a large social movement environment. In order for a movement to be successful it is important to frame the grievances around the issue (Snow & Benford 1992). However, gender discriminations and divisions visible in the wider society are greatly reflected in the framing of grievances of the movement. Kuumba (2001) further argues about the framing of women's identities as mothers, which has been used in movements in South Africa.

Motta et al. (2011), also argue that feminist scholars and activists have been critical of the centrality of the male hero in the narratives of national movements while the role of women have been relegated to political practices hinging on motherhood, care-worker and cooperation. The male identities in these movements have been framed as the protectors displaying strong notions of patriarchy. In India, often, these notions of patriarchy and sexism have been major impediments in the mobilisation of women and integrating them within the larger structures of the social movement (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Socio-Political and Media Environment').

In talking about gender it must be remembered that the experiences of all women cannot be explained in the same way and categorised under a single unified group. For many marginalised groups, identity based politics has been a source of strength, community, and intellectual development. However, the problem with indent politics, in many cases, is that it ignores intra-group differences. Violence faced by women is often shaped by other dimensions of their identity including race and class (Bilge 2010). The concept of intersectionality was initially coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) where she argued that the experiences of women of colour, are often a result of intersecting patterns of sexism and racism. Thus, as opposed to examining gender, race, class, and nation, as separate systems of oppression, intersectionality explores how these systems mutually construct and articulate one another (Collins 1998). The marginalisation, oppression and abuse faced by women of colour cannot be understood by considering feminist discourses and racism separately since race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political and representational aspects of violence against women of colour (Crenshaw 1991).

The intersectionality perspective emphasises that an individual's social identity exerts particular influences on the individual's beliefs and experiences of gender making it essential to understand gender within the context of power relations which are embedded in particular social identities (Shields 2008). Shields (2008) defines intersectionality as 'the mutually constituted relations among social identities' and that has become central to feminist thinking and contemporary studies on gender' (Shields

2008: 301). McCall (2005) suggests that intersectionality is one of the most important contributions to feminist theory in the contemporary understanding of gender.

Crenshaw (1989) further explains three kinds of intersectionality, structural, political and representational. Structural intersectionality is the way in which experience of domestic violence, rape and remedial reform of women can vary because in many cases women not only have to deal with the abuse but they also have to deal with other routinized forms of domination like poverty, childcare, lack of job skills, that cause a massive obstacle in their way to search for alternative forms of life (Carastathis 2014). In many cases, women are also completely dependent on their husbands and their lack of access to resources makes them less likely to have knowledge about available alternatives. According to Crenshaw (1991), 'intersectional subordination need not be intentionally produced; in fact, it is frequently the consequence of the imposition of one burden that interacts with pre-existing vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment' (Crenshaw 1991: 1250).

Political intersectionality highlights that fact that women of colour are situated within at least two subordinate groups subject to their race and gender that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas. Black feminist thought was critical of discourses of feminism and racism that failed women of colour by not acknowledging the issues of patriarchy and racism but they also often failed to highlight the full nature and dimension of racism or sexism. Thus, by embracing the paradigm of race and gender as interlocking systems of oppression, Black feminist thought reconceptualises the social relations of domination and of resistance (Collins 2002). Crenshaw (1991) further argues, 'the failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of colour, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women' (Crenshaw 1991: 1252).

In case of sexual violence such as rape of minority women, their interests often fall in the void between concerns about women's issues and concerns about racism. However, 'when one discourse fails to acknowledge the significance of the other, the power relations that each attempts to challenge are strengthened' (Crenshaw 1991: 1282).

Many scholars have suggested that the reason for devaluation of women of colour or of minority women is linked to questions about representation (Carastathis 2014). However, much debated issues of representation in few cases take into account the question of intersectionality. Crenshaw (1991) further defines representational intersectionality as, ‘the ways in which these images are produced through a confluence of prevalent narratives of race and gender, as well as recognition of how contemporary critiques of racist and sexist representation marginalize women of colour’ (Crenshaw 1991: 1283). Thus, intersectionality helps establish the fact that sexism and racism are mutually reinforcing.

Since Crenshaw (1991) proposed the concept of intersectionality it has been considered and approached in various different ways and this has given rise to certain controversies regarding the theory itself (Nash 2013). While some scholars have considered it as a theory, others have considered it as a heuristic process and as a strategy for feminist analysis (Anthias 2012; Lewis 2009). This has given rise to questions regarding whether intersectionality should be applied only to understand individual experiences and theorising identities or if it should be considered as a characteristic of social structures and cultural discourses (Davis 2008). In the context of intersectionality, British feminists have talked about the concept of ‘triple oppression’ in which they claimed that black women often suffer a combination of three different levels of oppression or discrimination. They suffer oppression because of their colour, gender and as a member of the working class (Lynn 2014). However, this concept has also been critiqued by Yuval-Davis (2006) who maintains that, ‘any attempt to essentialise ‘Blackness’ or ‘womanhood’ or ‘working class-ness’ as specific forms of concrete oppression in additive ways inevitably conflates narratives of identity politics with descriptions of positionality as well as constructing identities within the terms of specific political projects’ (Yuval-Davis 2006: 195). Such narratives can be harmful and further marginalise the experiences of women belonging to certain specific social structures.

The importance of intersectionality as a concept cannot be ignored, as it is increasingly difficult to speak about gender without considering other social identities and structures of dominance. In this context Knapp (2005) suggests that, ‘the political and moral need for feminism to be inclusive in order to be able to keep up its own foundational

premises opened up the avenues for dispersion and acceleration of race/ethnicity, class, gender/sexuality' (Knapp 2005: 253). Thus, the concept of intersectionality has not remained static and this approach has been applied beyond the original foci on race, ethnicity, gender, and class to incorporate citizenship, sexuality, religion, age, and other dimensions of subordination, across many different social and cultural settings (Bose 2012).

Intersectionality is a reflection of reality and in reality there is no single social identity category that can describe how individuals respond to their social environment and how others respond to them in the same environment and it is important to consider an interconnection of multiple identities in order to fully understand the complex nature of reality (Shields 2008). Intersectionality as a theory may lack precision, but it is this very imprecision which makes it dynamic and an important device for critical feminist analysis. Thus on talking about intersectionality Davis (2008) states that, 'it encourages complexity, stimulates creativity, and avoids premature closure, tantalising feminist scholars to raise new questions and explore uncharted territory' (Davis 2008: 79). India is an increasingly diverse society with a wide range of intersecting discriminations that affect women. Class and caste divisions form the foundation of the hierarchical nature of Indian society and the intersection of class, caste, cultural divisions, language along with patriarchy, forms a complex web of discrimination and violence for women. Thus, in order to completely understand the nature of violence and discrimination faced by women in India it is important to explore the intersecting factors of class, caste and cultural practices when looking at gender violence (See Chapter 6: The Intersection of Gender, Caste and Class in the Indian Context).

The issues about gender equality were placed in the policy agenda by women. However, in order to fully mainstream gender in the theoretical framework it is also important to consider the question of masculinity. Masculinity does not simply mean talking about men but it means talking about the position of men in context of gender relations and gender order. There are multiple forms of masculinities with multiple internal complexities and contradictions. According to Connell (2005), 'gender inequalities are embedded in a multidimensional structure of relationships between women and men, which, as the modern sociology of gender shows, operates at every level of human

experience, from economic arrangements, culture and the state to interpersonal relationships and individual emotions' (Connell 2005: 1801). Masculinities are socially constructed configurations of gendered practices but they are also created through a historical process with global dimensions.

Connell (2014) argues about the influence of colonisation in the construction of masculinities. The process of colonisation and western influences on local patriarchies has often resulted in destabilising local gender relations and giving rise to violent aftermath as in the case of southern Africa and Japan (Ito 1992; Morrell 1998). Masculinities are also socially constructed, which dictates that men belonging to that culture should adhere to certain behavioural traits and social expectations. Many men have grown up with the expectation of being the 'breadwinner' and being socially and economically superior to women, which puts immense pressure on them to adhere to those social norms (Morrell 2001). Masculinities change in time and in history. This is extremely important in order to explore the participation of men in gender activism in India and the changing nature of masculinity with social media and ICTs (see Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).

The topic of men and masculinities emerged as an international gender and development concern for the first time at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, when the declaration asked participating governments to encourage the participation of men and boys in all actions towards equality (UN Women 1995a). Connell (2005) emphasises the need to integrate men in the process of achieving gender equality because, in most cases, men control a large amount of the resources required to implement women's claims for justice thus making them, in a very significant way, the 'gatekeepers for gender equality' (Connell 2005: 1802). It is also important to remember that by no means are all men equal. For example, a man who has benefited from corporate wealth and a secure lifestyle is very different from a man who forms part of the workforce in a developing country. Factors such as race, class, national and regional differences divide the category men spreading the costs of gender relations very unevenly among different groups of men. Thus, certain groups of men may see that their interests are more closely aligned with women in their communities than with other men (Connell 2005).

1.4.2 Gender and ICTs

The relationship between women and technology has never been a very simple one. The Internet is often considered as a horizontal platform which is devoid of hierarchy (Castells 1996). However there are many power relations that work even within the virtual world as they do in the real world and by no means can the online space be called a gender-neutral space (Motta et al. 2011). However, ICTS have been defining and redefining gender relations in complex and multi-dimensional ways. On one hand we see ICTs creating and reinforcing the traditional ideas about women and how they should be and on the other hand it is also being used as a very powerful tool to challenge traditional gender norms. Thus, while ICTs can be used in several ways to educate women and make them aware of their rights, it can be widely argued that technology has never been gender neutral and women have never had access to all the technologies required for building basic life skills. Gurumurthy (2004) in this case has criticised the mainstream view of technology, which states that it is a tool that can be used by society but not something that is influenced by society. Feminists have also criticised the view and said that technology has never been gender neutral and has always been dependant on culture and society (Patel et al. 2012; Gattiker 1994).

To understand why ICTs are not gender neutral, there is a need to discuss the concept of digital divide. Digital divide can broadly be defined as the economic inequality and gap in opportunities experienced by those with limited or no access to technology especially the Internet (Sciadas 2005). This definition can be used to divide the world largely into two categories, those who have and those who do not, in terms of technology. While addressing the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in 2003 UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan emphasised on digital divide and how it affects women. He said,

The so-called digital divide is actually several gaps in one. There is a technological divide – great gaps in infrastructure. There is a content divide. A lot of web-based information is simply not relevant to the real needs of people.

And nearly 70 per cent of the world's websites are in English, at times crowding out local voices and views. There is a gender divide, with women and girls enjoying less access to information technology than men and boys. This can be true of rich and poor countries alike.

(UN Secretary General 10 December 2003)

This quote is specifically important for two reasons. Firstly, it acknowledges that there is a gender divide, with women and girls enjoying less access to information technology than men and boys and that can be true of rich and poor countries alike. Secondly, he talks about the technological gaps in terms of infrastructure, content gap in terms of language and all of these have a gender aspect to it. Thus, gender cannot be considered as a separate entity and while bridging each of these gaps gender issues need to be addressed. It has been seen that women are in the minority users of ICTs in almost all developed and developing countries. This discrimination in use starts early, as seen even in the United States where boys are more likely than girls to use home computers and parents spend twice as much on ICT products for their sons as they do for their daughters (Newburger 1999; Nations & Programme 1999).

This gender divide does not extend only to ICTs but in all industries, which are dependent on technologies. A study spreading over hundreds of development projects revealed that more than one-third of all projects had a high degree of awareness of gender issues but the gender sensitivity to the ICT components was carried over in less than 10% of all the cases (Hafkin 2002). The IT boom has been a part of a bigger process of globalisation and in terms of work and it has affected both men and women in very different ways. IT clusters are located in specific geographical areas, benefit only a few people, guarantee no equitable growth to the economy and most importantly women, in most cases, still get the low-end jobs. Costanza-Chock (2003), compares the development of the IT sector with the garment industry and electronic sweatshops stating that both industries are characterised by poor wages, poor work conditions, absence of unions, little to no skill or technology transfer, deskilling of the workforce, absence of career growth and feminisation of the low-end jobs (Costanza-Chock 2003). This is interesting because often IT industries and the outsourced sector is a big benchmark for success in many developing countries including India. Thus, as

Gurumurthy (2004: 21) states, 'poor nations compete with each other to attract transnational corporations in a race to the bottom'.

The major issue related to the gender divide in ICTs is the all-round problem of access and the use of ICTs. Few rural villages, especially in developing countries like India, have access to the Internet and if they do it mostly taken advantage of by men. Therefore the urban bias in connectivity deprives women, more than men, of the universal right to communicate (Hafkin 2002). Infrastructure is mostly concentrated around the urban areas that deny the bulk of rural women the right to basic ICT related education. Even in the same social environment, men and women usually do not have equal access to technology. Women's rights groups working in rural areas in India have pointed out how the access to household assets are affected by gender and if the household has one radio, it is most likely to be used by men. Firstly, women may not have the leisure to listen to the radio and secondly, they may not be allowed to join the men sitting outside the house listening to the radio (Gurumurthy 2004). The same analogy can be used in case of ICTs.

A large factor in gender divide in technology is due to the lack of infrastructure. However, Hafkin (2002) states that infrastructure in itself is a gendered issue because it is concentrated in the urban areas and not the rural areas. Thus, rural people, especially rural women, have no or little access to technology. Various social and cultural issues also need to be taken into consideration when addressing the problem of the gender divide in technology (Patel et al. 2012). In India distance, security, lack of transportation, lack of female trainers, family duties and restrictions, lack of financial support and language can all be reasons that deprive women from accessing and learning to use technology. Hence to make technology available to women, all the above infrastructural, social and educational barriers need to be taken into consideration (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Socio-Political and Media Environment').

At the Fourth World Conference on Women, at Beijing held on the 15th of September 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted which was the first international

policy framework that addressed gender issues in relation to ICTs. The report published after the conference states,

With advances in computer technology and satellite and cable television, global access to information continues to increase and expand, creating new opportunities for the participation of women in communications and the mass media and for the dissemination of information about women. On the other hand, the global communication networks have been used to spread stereotyped and demeaning images of women for narrow commercial and consumerist purposes. Until women participate equally in both the technical and decision-making areas of communications and the mass media, including the arts, they will continue to be misrepresented and awareness of the reality of women's lives will continue to be lacking.

(UN Women 17 October 1995)

The Beijing platform was followed by the World Telecommunications Development Conference, organised by ITU, in Valletta, Malta in 1998 and the UN World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in 2003. The Beijing platform was considered as a landmark not only because it was a first of its kind but also because key players across the world mobilised around the conference to promote women's rights through strategic use of ICTs at a regional level.

WSIS was mandated with the people-centred agenda of furthering achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, the process was, to a great extent, stuck in different politics and bureaucracies that were more interested in protecting the interests of multinational companies than promoting people's interests. The civil society's input did not have sufficient impact. Official delegations were not willing to agree upon rights and values that the international community has endorsed in various international conventions and declarations before the conference. As a result it failed to develop a broader vision towards an inclusive, sustainable and people-centred information society (Gurumurthy 2004).

For the inclusion of gender specific issues in policies, plans and strategies, particularly those in the developing country, there is a need for statistical data on the subject. Thus it can be stated that much like a digital divide, a statistical divide also exists, especially where it is needed most, in developing countries. WSIS recognised this gap and said that there was a need for internationally comparable statistics to monitor the progress of the global information society. They also mentioned the lack of statistics in developing countries and the need for gender-specific indicators on ICT in order to measure the impact of projects related to ICTs on the lives of women and girls (ITU 2003).

To take steps against this problem, after the WSIS mandate ITU included sex-disaggregated indicators in its annual questionnaire to member states and in its Telecommunications Indicator Handbook. The two new indicators that were introduced were female Internet users as a percentage of total users and female Internet users as a percentage of female users of technology. In other household ICT surveys, some sex-disaggregated results were noticed but it was not correct in all cases as it considered the entire household as one unit and the assumed that the responses from the household pertained equally to both males and females (ITU 2003). In a report generated by Orbicom it was stated that,

It is not possible to quantify the gender digital divide in a way comparable to the systematic measurement of countries' Infostates due to the scarcity of data, both in the scope of coverage and the degree of detail available. The use of existing quantitative data and qualitative research provides a compelling analysis of the gender digital divide.

(Sciadas 2005: vi)

Rowlands (1996), argues about the existence of an information policy hierarchy where ICT policies can be divided into three major categories: infrastructural, vertical and horizontal policies. Some national policies focus almost entirely on one area but the policy will include elements of all three areas. However, there are crucial gender issues

in all three categories and almost every component of each one of these categories can affect the majority of women differently, and often negatively.

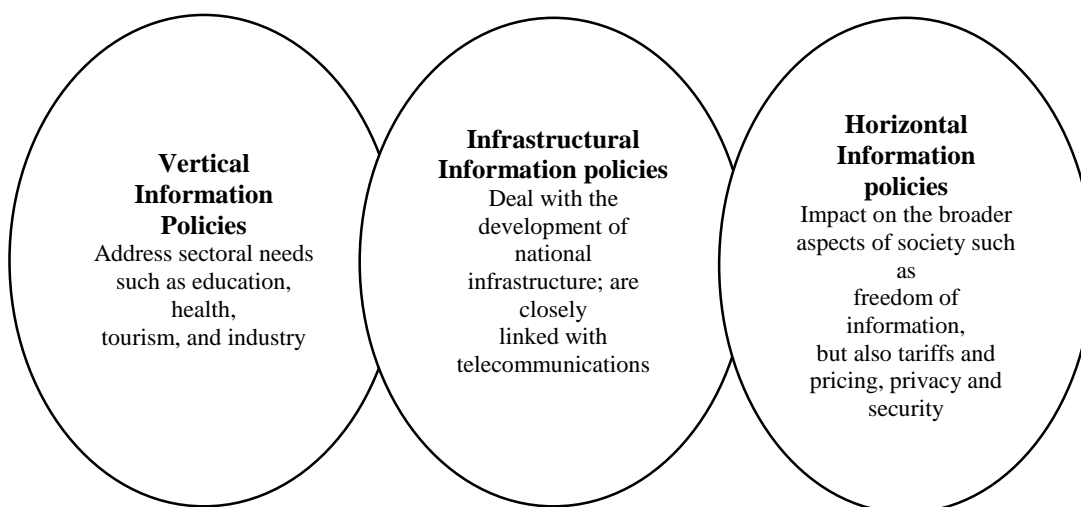


Figure 2: Gender issues in Vertical, Infrastructural and Horizontal Information Policies
Source: (Hafkin 2002: 8)

In this case Hafkin (2002) also states that ICT policies should be integrated with other policy areas to ensure that efforts towards sustainable development are co-ordinated and cohesive. To achieve that, awareness needs to be raised about the issue. Soniya Jorge (2001) has done a lot of work around how to sensitise policy makers about gender issues and she emphasises proper training of policy makers on gender issues so that they are capable of including it in future policies. Apart from policy makers large parts of women's organisations and civil society needs to be trained as well since they have a huge impact on the advocacy level in order to push for policy changes but also to ensure the correct implementation of the policies.

Civil society groups have been at the forefront of global advocacy, raising active debates about the techno-centrism of global ICTs, multiple digital divides, including gender divide and the need to preserve and nurture global information communication technologies. The specific characteristics open new doors and create new opportunities for achieving gender equality. More recently there has been a shift from an emphasis on women solely as objects of information to a focus on women as controllers of

information. This not only changes the way women are talked about but would enable more women, particularly marginalised women, to create their own information and spread their own messages through the new ICTs (Villanueva 2000).

Across the world, ICTs are not only being used for business and education but various NGOs and feminist groups have found a new platform to voice their opinions and fight for the rights of women. The explosion of feminist blogs, online magazines, online petitions, social media campaigns have changed the way young entrepreneurs, thought leaders and grassroots activists perceive feminism and discuss the most pressing issues. Online feminist blogs have been called ‘the 21st century version of consciousness raising’ which constitutes as a ‘communications arm for the contemporary feminist movement and an inexhaustible force continually radicalising and challenging its institutionalisation’ (Martin & Valenti 2012: 3).

Online feminism has the power to mobilise the young, the old and everyone in between and take political actions at an unprecedented scale and speed. It has produced remarkable effects and changed the way advocacy and action functions and conducted within the feminist community. According to Martin and Valenti (2012) ‘Online feminism has the capacity to be the nervous system of this modern day feminist body politic’ (Martin and Valenti 2012: 5). Several feminist movements and campaigns in recent times have seen the use of ICTs and social media at its core. An example of such a movement is the ‘Slut Walk’, which started in Toronto following a police officer’s statement that woman should stop acting as ‘sluts’ as an act of rape prevention. The Internet erupted with protest and women across the globe, including several cities in India took to the streets to protest against equality and freedom (Mendes 2015).

New ICTs have provided new technologies and metaphors allowing feminists to both rethink and reconfigure feminist activism. ICTs have empowered women through facilitating access to increasingly rhizomatic or horizontally structured participation mechanisms allowing marginalised communities to advocate for themselves, to request advocacy from international organisations, or to organise themselves into diasporic, transnational organisations (Schulte et al. 2011). Connections set up online are helping

to create meaningful collaboration between different sectors including grass root activists, charities and corporate bodies. Jensine Larsen of World Plus, in this context comments that,

Each has expertise that the other can benefit from; non-profit organisations often have the infrastructure (physical space, resources, womanpower) that online feminists crave, and online feminists often deploy the communications innovations that non-profit organisations struggle to generate while already stretched thin trying to achieve their larger missions.

(Larsen 2012 cited in Martin & Valenti 2012: 10)

This is resulting in new ideas and new projects. The Crunk Feminist Collective, for example, mobilise young people to not only talk about local issues or federal policies but also about healing, reclamation, solidarity, beauty and wisdom. Online activists are using this platform to transform popular culture into social change (Crunk Feminist Collective n.d.). Young people online are thus transformed from passive pop culture consumers to engagers and users. It has created a more open space for learning and accountability, helping to push mainstream feminism to be less monolithic (Shaw 2012).

Online organising is a relatively new area of work and people are still struggling to set up proper infrastructure and funding. Big websites do tend to make some money due to lucrative page views but it is very difficult to get funding for small bloggers who want to run such blogs and often many bloggers stop their projects due to the lack of money. However, due to strategies like crowdfunding a lot of money is being raised online in a collaborative effort for organisations and individual projects. Crowdfunding allows non-profits, artistic, cultural and business ventures to fund their efforts on small contributions from a large number of individuals using the Internet without standard financial intermediaries (Mollick 2014). However, many of the projects who get such funding do not reach the completion or struggle when the goals are made higher making them reactive and short term (Blanding 1 July 2013).

The lack of infrastructure and sustainability make meaningful and long-term strategizing online often extremely difficult. Individuals who have found their voice online often struggle to make a proper living and are forced to juggle multiple jobs (Pulotil 2 June 2015). To avoid this, the online community will have to strategize and partner with a range of feminist allies. Meaningful and profitable collaborations will have to be set up among advocacy and non-profit organisations, philanthropists and entrepreneurs, corporate leadership with a feminist sensibility, educators, community organisers, artists, youth and many others. There is an urgent need to create that space and the time where ‘strategy and collaboration are prioritised, supported, and expected, and where feminists of all ages—but especially the young and online—have a chance to do the profound work of dreaming together’ (Martin & Valenti 2012: 28).

It is difficult to organise and strategize such a decentralised movement but some organisations have already taken a step forward in trying to establish these vital connections and collaborations in order to keep the new age feminism alive. Conferences like TEDxWoman, Women in the World, BlogHer, WAM!, Omega Woman and Power Conference provide a wonderful opportunity for activists to get together and set up valuable connections. FemFuture aims to organise an annual meeting where feminists, activists, philanthropists, educators can all come together and brainstorm ideas. Such opportunities can not only be used to share ideas but also develop valuable partnerships which enables activists to share workspace, content, joint hiring of staff and combining projects. This could not only result in sharing of ideas and intellect but also build international solidarity (Shaw 2012; Keller 2012; Everett 2004). Steps are also being taken to promote businesses owned by women. Women innovators and entrepreneurs can play a vital role in taking forward and bringing gender issues in front of the world. According to Martin and Valenti (2012),

The opportunities for collaboration are infinite, as are the possibilities for impact. All that remains is for us to connect the dots—between voice and influence, between the broad base and the tools, between the online organisers and the philanthropic innovators, between the policy goals and the savviest civic engagement strategies, between our present and our more feminist future.....We

are creating a cost for injustice. We are rewriting the story. We are mobilising fundamental change. There are tools at our disposal like never before. We've got the Internet to spread the word faster and farther, to spark people to action. We've got reader and philanthropic fuel to spread the spark. We've got power—both in numbers and, increasingly, in the formal leadership of many sectors.

(Martin & Valenti 2012: 34)

1.5 Research Question

Given the issues identified throughout the literature, the thesis has addressed the following research questions:

1. How did sociopolitical activism in India take place after the 'Nirbhaya Rape Case' on December 16, 2012? This includes identifying the participants, the recruitment process, the mobilisation structures, political opportunity structures and the framing processes (Answered in Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework).
2. What was the role of ICTs and social media during the Nirbhaya protests? (Answered in Chapter 5: Nirbhaya and Beyond- The Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India)
3. How have ICTs and social media helped in creating a bigger gender movement and changed the nature of gender activism in India post the Nirbhaya case? (Answered in Chapter 5: Nirbhaya and Beyond- The Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India)
4. How do gender discourses affect digital activism in India and what factors need to be taken into consideration to understand the relation between gender and ICTs? (See Chapter 6: 'The Intersection of Gender, Caste and Class in the Indian Context')

In order to address these research questions I have extended the cyberconflict framework by including gender as a crucial element and developing a framework that can be used as a feminist mode of analysing social movements. Further, following the cyberconflict framework the analysis has been divided into three chapter (Chapter 4, 5, 6) which aim to answer these research questions

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter traces out the cyberconflict framework in order to understand the emergence, development and outcome of social movements that use ICTs and social media. Following the framework, the chapter has been divided into three main sections, social movement theory, media theory and conflict theory (gender and ICTs). It is of primary importance to frame detailed analysis of the theories that form the foundation of this research. Following the social movement framework put forward by McAdam (1996), I have discussed the mobilising structures, opportunity structures and framing process which are essential to understand the nature of social movements. Collective actions are of utmost importance for the success of social movements and mobilisation structures enable individuals and groups to organise and engage in collective action (McCarthy 1996). Mobilisation structures can encompass both formal structures like organisations and also informal structures like networks of kinship or friendship (Garrett, 2006). However, in both cases, it is importance to generate solidarity that holds the movement together resulting in collective action. Zald & McCarthy (1979) also argue about the importance of collection of suitable resources that are necessary for the sustenance of social movements.

In order for a movement to be successful it also important to have the right environment within which the movement operates. This is called political opportunity and it helps in facilitating or constraining a social movement. Ayres (1999) states that the use of ICTs has made social movements increasingly transnational which in turn affects national opportunity structures. Political opportunity plays a central role in the emergence of social movements however scholars have argued that a combination of mobilisation structures, collective identity and cultural factors are also hugely important for the emergence and development of social movements (Staggenborg 1998). Another factor that plays a central dynamic in understanding the course and character of social movement is framing process. Social movement frames helps in strategically framing the grievances that helps in the forming of the ideologies and the motivations that results in collective action.

New media and ICTs play a huge role in the development of social movements. In this context it is important to understand the concept of networked society as put forward by Castells (1996). The networked society has a structure that consists of networks. They are characterised by the absence of centres and horizontal structures (Castells 2004). The development and availability of new technologies have resulted in widespread availability of information resulting in far reaching changes. It is essential for SMOs to use the media in ways that they can spread the message. ICTs and social media have provided activists with a new platform that they can use to create solidarity, increase participation and raise consciousness.

Finally in this chapter I have mainstreamed theories on gender in both the social movement framework and the media framework to extend the cyberconflict framework and make it more inclusive. The study of social movements has been considered mostly gender neutral (West & Blumberg 1990) until recent times when scholars started looking at social movements through the gender lens to gain better understanding of the nature and outcome of movements and also to study the role of women in social movements. There is a wide gender divide that exists in all aspects of social movement including mobilisation structures, collective actions and leadership structures (Kuumba 2001). The gender divide also largely exists in the use of media and technology as, power relations that exist in the real world also exist in the online world. However, new digital technologies have been defining and redefining gender relations in different ways and activists across the globe have been using social media and ICTs to reinvent activism (Gurumurthy 2004; Schulte et al. 2011).

In the next chapter: ‘Methodology and Empirical Analysis’, I establish the philosophical underpinning and methods that guide this research. Further, I also discuss the research methodology, data collection and sampling techniques, data analysis and research ethics.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Empirical Analysis

This research looks at feminist and gender based activism in India with the help of ICTs. Utilising the December 2012 rape case in India as a case study, this research examines the nature and impact of the use of ICTs and social media on sociopolitical activism that took place after the case. Based on the on-going gender activism in India, this research also explores the dialogue between gender violence and justice that emerged from the Nirbhaya case and resulted in the sustainability of the gender movement in India. In order to conduct the research in a systematic manner it is of prime importance to establish suitable research methods and philosophical underpinnings in order to justify the way the research was conducted.

This chapter puts forward different philosophical stances and research paradigms that have been taken into consideration and provides a rationale for this choice, with respect to the research questions and objectives. In this chapter I further discuss the research methodology, data collection techniques and that have been undertaken in order to appropriately answer the research question. Furthermore, I also talk about the research ethics and measures that were undertaken to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical manner.

2.1 Understanding Research Philosophy and Paradigm

2.1.1 Ontology

The question about ontology is concerned with the reality and nature of social entities (Sobh & Perry 2006; Blaikie 2007). The central point of ontology is the question that if social actors can, or should be, considered as objective entities that have a reality external to the social actors, or if they should be considered as social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors (Bryman & Bell 2015). Stanley and Wise (1993) argue that ontology is the ‘seat of experience and thus of theory and knowledge’ (Stanley & Wise 1993: 192). Ontology can be further divided into two

positions: objectivism and constructionism/constructivism. The argument from an objectivist perspective is that the existence of the real world is external to human and completely independent of human experiences (Jonassen 1991). On the other hand, the argument from the point of view of constructionism/constructivism argues that humans create their own reality, or at least interpret it, based on their own experiences (Jonassen 1991). Constructivism further establishes that any social phenomenon and their meaning is constantly being accomplished by social actors, which means that social phenomenon is not only being produced through social interactions but they are also in a constant state of revision (Bryman & Bell 2015).

From an ontological point of view, the methodological commitment of this research follows a constructivist philosophy, ‘imputing agency into socio-structural accounts by emphasising how people construct social structures that influence and reconstruct them’ (Radsch 2013: 68). It believes that views, knowledge, understanding, interpretations, experiences and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality that is explored in the research questions. Great importance is attached to the perception of its participants and in discursive construction of the social reality (Plummer 2001). This research acknowledges, from an ontological point of view, that a woman’s experience constitutes a very different kind of reality and this knowledge enables us to gain a more profound understanding of very important questions such as: ‘What is it to be a women?’, ‘what the social world looks like to women?’, how the social reality is constructed and negotiated by women?’ (Stanley & Wise 1993: 119). Stanley & Wise (1993) also state that feminism is deeply rooted in the ‘acknowledgement that all social knowledge is generated as a part and a product of human social experience’ (Stanley & Wise 1993: 192), thus further justifying the constructivist approach embraced for the purpose of this research.

2.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the question of knowledge and what is, or can be, considered as acceptable knowledge (Bryman & Bell 2015). It further considers the question of how to understand the nature of reality and what is the relationship between

the reality and the researcher (Sobh & Perry 2006). Stanley & Wise (1993) say that, ‘an epistemological framework specifies not only what ‘knowledge’ is and how to recognise it, but who are ‘knowers’ and by what means someone becomes one, and also the means by which competing knowledge-claims are adjudicated and some rejected in favour of another/others’ (Stanley & Wise 1993: 188). Further epistemology can be divided into two main positions, positivism and interpretivism. The argument from an positivist perspective is that in order for knowledge to be acceptable, a phenomenon must be measurable and the role of research is to test theories and hypothesis that will allow the assessment and explanations of laws (Bryman & Bell 2015). On the other hand, interpretivism distinguishes human experiences from the natural order arguing that knowledge cannot be created without acknowledging the role played by social actors. Thus interpretivism aims to develop new theories as opposed to testing a previously existing hypothesis (Bryman & Bell 2015).

From an epistemological point of view, this research is deeply rooted in an interpretivist philosophy as it is concerned with how the complex, multi-layered social world is ‘interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted’ (Mason 2002). This research, from an epistemological position, also accepts that a legitimate and meaningful way to gather data on a certain reality is to interact freely with the participants, ask them questions, listen to them, gain access to their accounts and articulations, analyse their use of language and construction of discourse (Mason 2002: 64). Following Clisby (2001), I have used the term participant in this research instead of ‘interviewees’, ‘the researched’ or ‘respondents’. This has been done in order to establish a more egalitarian relation between the researcher and the people with whom the research was conducted.

Alcoff & Potter (2013) state that feminist epistemology should be concerned with the knowledge created by women and their understandings and experiences. Narayan (2004) supports this view and states that, ‘feminist epistemology resembles the efforts of many oppressed groups to reclaim for themselves the value of their own experience’ (Narayan 2004: 2014). Cook & Fonow (1986) identify five basic epistemological principles in feminist methodology. These include the taking of women and gender as the focus of analysis, the importance of consciousness raising, the rejection of subject

and object (this means valuing the knowledge held by the participant as being expert knowledge and acknowledging how research valued as 'objective' always reflects a specific social and historical standpoint, a concern with ethics (throughout the research process and in the use of research results) and an intention to empower women and change power relations and inequality. However, Narayan (2004) also warns in that, in many cases, the experiences of western feminists overshadow the experiences of non-western feminists. Hesse-Biber (2013) states that the first step to reduce the hierarchy between the researcher and the women being interviewed is to be consciously aware of the different status they occupy with regards to their participants and reduce the hierarchy of these status positions by emphasising to the participants their choice, power and control during the interview process. Great efforts have been taken in order to ensure that this research is as non-hierarchical as possible giving equal importance to the voices of all the participants in the research.

2.1.3 Inductive and Deductive Theory

A research paradigm is a set of beliefs in a particular discipline that dictate what should be studied and how research should be conducted (Bryman & Bell 2015; Mason 2002; Weaver & Olson 2006; Kermode & Roberts 2007). The choice of paradigm depends on the nature of the investigation, the philosophical stances adopted for the research and the aims of the research. Broadly there are two ways in which research can be conducted: inductive and deductive.

Using a deductive approach a researcher, on the basis of what is known about a particular domain and its theoretical considerations, would formulate a hypothesis, which would then have to translate into research entities (Bryman & Bell 2015).

Through this deductive approach the theory guides the research and the hypothesis that is developed by the researcher is tested by selecting a fairly large sample in order to generalise the findings. Inductive research, on the other hand, aims at developing theories rather than testing them. An inductive approach has a theory as its outcome rather than its starting point. It is less structured and the results are less generalised

(Collis & Hussey 2009). Bryman & Bell (2015) state that an inductive approach is associated with constructivism and interpretivism and therefore follows a qualitative approach. This research follows an inductive approach and hence has been advanced from a qualitative perspective.

Qualitative research is not a unified set of philosophies and techniques. It has evolved from a wide range of intellectual and disciplinary traditions (Mason 2002). According to Brennen (2012), 'qualitative research is interdisciplinary, interpretative, political and theoretical in nature. Using language to understand concepts based on people's experience, it attempts to create a sense of a larger realm of human relationships' (Brennen 2012: 4). Qualitative research provides the opportunity to explore different dimensions of the social world. This includes the texture and weave of everyday life as well as the understandings, experiences and imaginings of the research participants. It helps us understand how social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work and the meanings they generate (Mason 2002). Mason (2002) further states that qualitative methodologies celebrate the rich, deep, multi-dimensional and complex nature of the research and instead of negating these in search of a general average, qualitative research directly include them into the analysis and the explanations. In this context Brennen (2012) also states that qualitative research understands and respects that reality is a social construct and it considers alternative notions of knowledge. It showcases a variety of meanings and truths. It also believes in the active role of the researcher in the process of the research (Brennen 2012).

2.2 Research Method: Case Study

Since the Nirbhaya case forms the core of this study, the case study approach has been considered most appropriate in order to critically analyse the case and extend our understanding of the use of ICTs in gender activism in India. The political, economic, social and ideological structures of a certain place in a given time have immense influence on the public discourse, creating opportunities for some and limitations for the others belonging to that particular society. The means of distribution and institutional

arrangements of a particular society provide different opportunity structures to different actors, empowering certain groups over the others (Kuumba 2001; Orchard 2004). Public discourse helps shape societal configurations and designs the rules and norms of that particular society. Dominant modes of communication form an intrinsic part of the public discourse (Garrett 2006). Thus it can be stated that ICTs are intrinsically intertwined with the public discourse of a given society in recent times. So a critical examination is required for the question: ‘how particular discourse configurations get used and deployed can reveal how agents and categories of agents, like bloggers and activists, emerge and help explain how and in what ways they can create a movement and have a political impact’ (Radsch 2013: 69). This research explores the ICTs available during the period of study, how they emerged and spread and how they were used and adapted by social actors who participated in the case under consideration.

Yin (2014) defined case study as, ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ (Yin 2014: 16). The case study approach adopted by this study helps in the detailed analysis of event, conditions and relationships using multiple sources of evidence. In this case it is also appropriate to justify the use of case study over other research methods. Yin (2014) states that in order to establish ‘case study’ as the appropriate research method it is essential to answer three basic questions, which include: does the research pose ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions? What is the degree of focus on contemporary events within a real life context? How much control can a researcher exercise over the actual behavioural events?

Firstly, the main research questions I have adopted for this study are ‘how’ questions, which include, how did the sociopolitical activism in India take place after the ‘Nirbhaya Rape Case’ on December 16, 2012? How did the use of ICTs in the Nirbhaya protests help the movement? How have ICTs helped in creating a bigger gender movement in India post Nirbhaya? How have ICTs changed the nature of gender activism in India? Finally, how do gender discourses affect digital activism in India and what factors need to be taken into consideration to understand the relation between gender and ICTs? Secondly, the event that I am studying for this research is

contemporary and finally, as a researcher, I had no control over the working environment or relevant behaviours of participants at any stage of the research.

For the purpose of this research, a single case study approach has been adopted. Yin (2014) states that a single case study approach is appropriate under five single case study rationals that is, 'critical, unusual, common, revelatory or longitudinal' (Yin 2014: 51). This research is based on applying the cyberconflict framework in the Indian context and extending it by mainstreaming gender in the theoretical framework. This case study has been specifically chosen for this purpose. It has also been chosen because it is also an unusual case. India in the past has not witnessed a gender movement of such scale and impact. It has given rise to several questions about sexual violence and position of women in society that need to be critically studied and analysed. Parashar (11 February 2013) argues that few feminist scholars in India focus on sexual violence that occurs as a part of the everyday experience of women. She states, 'it is violence that is 'everyday' and occurs in more mundane situations, as experienced by Nirbhaya in Delhi, which does not attract as much feminist scholarly attention. I am not arguing that analyses of sexual violence in conflict are less important. I only wish to point out to the politics of exclusion' (Parashar 11 February 2013).

2.3 Data Collection

Multiple methods for data-collection have been taken into consideration in order to increase the rigor of analysis and develop an in-depth understanding of social experiences (Brennen 2012). This research has been approached from a multi-dimensional point of view. Keeping a case study at its core, it aims at exploring and understanding experiences and social constructs through different processes, which included: collecting information from online news portals and social media channels through the netnographic approach (Kozinets 2010; Bowler 2010) and qualitative interviews. The data collection took place in three phases. The first phase of data collection took place in real time as I followed the case online on a daily basis from the December 17, 2012 to gather information and critically analyse the nature of the movement. This formed the secondary data for this research. In the second phase I

conducted a pilot study in order to validate the research questions and interview guide. Finally, in the third phase I collected the primary data for this research by conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews, which included both Skype interviews and face-to-face interviews when I went to conduct my fieldwork in India. I continued the process of interviewing and data collection until saturation occurred. Saturation level is reached in the process of data collection when already existing and explored themes are repeating themselves and no new themes are emerging (Bryman & Bell 2015).

2.3.1 Phase 1: Online Data Collection- A Netnographic Approach

Communication acts as a medium of cultural transactions that not only deals with the exchange of information but also the exchange of meaning. According to Kozinets (2010: 12), 'online communities form or manifest cultures, the learned beliefs, values, and customs that serve to order, guide, and direct the behaviour of a particular society or group'. With the increase in the popularity of the Internet, more and more people are using it as a highly sophisticated communication device that enables and empowers the formation of online communities. Thus, to understand society, people's activities and behaviours, their experiences on the Internet must be followed. In order to achieve this Kozinets (2010) proposed the concept of netnography, which he described as a 'specialised form of ethnography adapted to the unique computer mediated contingencies of today's social worlds' (Kozinets 2010: 1). Netnography provides the methodological guidelines, a disciplined approach to the culturally-oriented study of the technologically-mediated social interaction that occurred through the Internet and other forms of ICTs. Netnography celebrates adaptability as a research method and for the purpose of this study, netnography is an excellent resource for qualitative research that provides useful insights through the analysis of texts posted online and by analysing human behaviours in the interactive sphere of the Internet (Serafinelli 2015).

Ethnographic research builds into a body of knowledge that is comprehensive and comparable. It is not used to produce generalised results and it is deep rooted in context. According to Kozinets (2010: 59), 'it is infused with and imbues local knowledge of the particular and the specific'. The popularity of ethnography lies in the fact that it is open

to interpretation and the rich content of its findings. It is an assimilative process and is often interlinked with multiple other methods. As more and more individuals use the Internet, an increasing number of its use facilitates connections and information sharing (Kozinets 2010). The increased popularity of the Internet has led to the ethnographic method being adopted for the internet mediated environment. Bowler (2010) argues that 'online ethnography refers to the online research methods which adapt to the study of communities and cultures through computer-mediated social interaction' (Bowler 2010:1270). Kozinets (2010) extends all ethnographies proposing to go beyond the mere observation of online cultures, phenomenon and individuals; rather it aims to deeply understand online communities and social interactions (Serafinelli 2015).

Garcia et al. (2009) state how the distinction between the real world and the virtual world, the online world and the off-line world has become considerably redundant as the activities in both these worlds have become 'increasingly merged in our society and as the two spaces interact and transform each other' (Garcia et al. 2009: 53). In order to adequately understand social life in contemporary society, it is becoming increasingly important to incorporate the study of the Internet in the realm of research. 'Virtual reality' is not a reality that is separate from the other aspects of human experience. On the other hand, it is an integral part of it (Garcia et al. 2009: 54). Both the real and the virtual world 'involve the detached study of a 'site' that pre-exists the ethnographer and, which the ethnographer comes to 'visit' as an 'outsider'' (Forte 2004: 226). In the physical world, communities are formed by a group of people who are bound together by some common identity or common intent. Similarly online communities too are formed of people who share a common identity or interests coming together for a shared purpose. Bowler (2010) argues that, 'this shared interest or intent offers a strong forum for members of the community to build relationships and affiliations out of which they can learn from one another and make an impact on the society or culture around them (Bowler 2010: 2).

The use of new media characterizes the majority of daily social processes. Within this environment Kozinets, (2010), for example, states that 'being in contact with an online community is increasingly a regular part of people's everyday lives' (Kozinets 2010:14) and as such, these mediated lives need to be analysed and contextualised (Serafinelli

2015). An accurate coordination of netnographic fieldwork includes the analysis of online social behaviours. I have used a netnographical approach in this research in order to identify appropriate relationships and investigate the meaning behind them. Within a group, netnography facilitates finding appropriate nodes irrespective of whether they are individuals, activities, messages, groups or some other social actors.

Considering the increased use of ICTs and social media in the case study in question, initially an online research was conducted for the purpose of identifying the fundamental information related to case and the protests that followed both online and offline. Hence, following the concepts put forward by Kozinets (2010), I have used netnography to explore a wide range of structural characteristics such as power and influence relationships, various types of social ties, and the clustering of social groups and cliques. In the case of this research, I have considered the netnographic approach as a starting point to analyse the nature of online and offline activism in the Nirbhaya case. It has been used to understand how people were interacting online, their relationships, how they were communicating and sharing information and finally identify the nature of the conversations. The netnographic approach was further used to understand the nature of participation in the protests that happened on ground, leadership structures in the protests, the behaviour and reactions of people and also the emergent ideological frames.

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the case study in question occurred a few months after I started my PhD. When the case took place I was trying to build a theoretical foundation for applying the cyberconflict framework in the Indian context to analyse the role of ICTs in social movements in India. I conducted the first phase of data collection using the netnographic approach in real time. In order to follow the developments in the case, I looked at online news channels, online newspapers, videos, articles on blogs and posts on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter from the December 17, 2012 till April 4, 2013 when the amendments in rape law was brought forward by the government.

To explore in greater detail the cause and nature of the activism, I followed several Facebook groups related to the Nirbhaya incident such as 'Swift Justice in Delhi Gang-Rape Case' and 'Delhi Rape case, penalty to death'. 'Kafila' and 'Youth Ki Awaaz' were the two main blogging platforms were followed. Apart from this websites of mainstream media sources like national newspapers and news channels were also followed in order to gain insight on what was happening on ground and also to understand how mainstream media was framing the incident and the protests that followed. This was also done to understand if the narratives on mainstream media was different from the narratives that emerged online on blogging platforms or on social media sites.

I archived all important articles in an organised way so that they could be used for the purpose of this research. Each article that was archived was then analysed from a theory driven point of view. I looked for specific information regarding different aspects of the cyberconflict theory (see Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations'). I was trying to identify who the participants were, how and why they joined the movement, the leadership structure, the political opportunity structure, ideological frames and most importantly the use of ICTs for both online and offline activism. Each article was manually coded and then the codes were analysed and combined to form overarching themes (Braun & Clarke 2006). This helped me find themes that I wanted to further explore in this research and directly led to the formulation of questions that were then used for the qualitative interviews. For example, one of the themes that emerged was related to individual participation. Hence in the interviews I asked participants if they participated as individuals or as a part of an organisation and why?

The themes that emerged at the end of analysis were extremely important. When analysing the interviews in the next stage of analysis I actively looked for these particular themes. They also served as a point of comparison with the themes that were obtained from analysing the interviews. Comparisons of themes from both these stages helped in increasing the rigor of analysis of the data that was obtained from both stages of data collection. The themes obtained from both stages were then used to extend the

cyberconflict framework by introducing a gendered perspective which was one of the main aims of the thesis (See 2.6 Data Analysis).

The data obtained from this phase was also used to identify particular participants and organisations that I wanted to interview in the next phase of data collection. While coding each article, I looked for individuals or organisations who participated in the Nirbhaya protests or have been associated with long-term gender activism. I created a list of people from these articles where they had been quoted or interviewed or they themselves were the author of the articles (See 2.3.3 Phase 3: Qualitative Interviews). I also looked for people on social media sources like Facebook and Twitter who were extremely vocal about the case.

The data from this stage of analysis also helped to inform many of the choices that was made during this research. For example, when tracing out the history of the Indian women's movement (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Socio-Political and Media Environment'), many of the cases mentioned like Rameezabee, Maya Tyagi, Mathura, Bhanwari Devi were women whose stories were reiterated by the media and even compared with the story of Nirbhaya after the case happened. These cases helped me build the background for this research. Further, when analysing rape cases from 1990 till 2012 in order to understand the punishment advocated for rapists, the cases that have been mentioned have all been obtained from this stage of data collection (See Chapter 6: The Intersection of Gender, Caste and Class in the Indian Context).

2.3.2 Phase 2: Pilot Study

In order to test the effectiveness and usefulness of the interview questions and finalisation of the actual interview guide (Bryman & Bell 2015), I conducted a pilot study prior to the fieldwork. The pilot stage was conducted between January and March 2014. In the first phase of the pilot study, a set of questions were prepared and emailed to the participants. They were asked to write down the answers to the questions and email it back to me. I also asked them to contact me in case of any difficulties or

enquiries. However, the text-based format was found to be very superficial, cumbersome and inadequate. Some participants took a considerable amount of time to reply while others did not reply at all. It also did not give me the opportunity to probe the participants for further questioning.

Therefore to overcome this problem and the lack of participant observation, two types of interviews were conducted; face-to-face interviews and online interviews over Skype. This was carried out in order to obtain a more audio-visual interaction with the participants. This allowed me to make the interview more interactive by utilising participant observation. Skype gave me the opportunity to observe the participants even within the online environment. There is a difference in opinion about the number of interviews that should be conducted in the pilot phase but two has been considered as an acceptable number (Bryman & Bell 2003; Yin 2014). In this case two face-to-face interviews and one online interview were conducted in the pilot stage.

The two face-to-face interviews were conducted in London with two members of a play called Nirbhaya. Both participants live in India and had travelled to the United Kingdom with the cast and crew of the play for their London performance. Both participants also participated in the protest marches post the Nirbhaya case. The Skype interview was conducted with a media professional who worked in a team that was responsible for making some hard-hitting gender related viral videos after the Nirbhaya case. All three interviews were transcribed and analysed to test and enhance the quality of the interview guide. Some questions that I found to be redundant were deleted from the interview guide and I changed the wordings of some other questions to make them clearer and more understandable. Some extra questions were also added keeping in mind the recurring themes that emerged in all three interviews. For example, all the respondents spoke about the participation of men in the protests after the Nirbhaya case, both online and offline. This was not initially a main focus in the research. However, after the pilot stage, questions about masculinity and nature of participation of men in the gender activism were included in the interview guide. This step helped in giving this research a constructive direction.

2.3.3 Phase 3: Qualitative Interviews

To collect the primary data for this research, I conducted semi-structured interviews. Considering the scope of the research, these interviews were conducted both online and in-person. According to Mason (2002), qualitative interviews do not only deal with the excavation of knowledge but also with the construction and reconstruction of knowledge. The aim of using qualitative interview was also to ensure that relevant context was brought into focus so that new knowledge could be produced. Kozinets (2010) states that online interviews are specifically relevant for research that looks at the detailed, subjective understanding of the lived experiences of online community participants ('phenomenological' understanding), that 'deepen the understanding of the relationship between a person's own unique socio-cultural situation and their online culture or community activities or behaviours', that deal in obtaining a 'detailed, grounded, subjective sense of an online community member's perspective and sense of meaning', or hear a person's recollection and interpretations of events (Kozinets 2010: 47).

In the case of this research, two types of sampling techniques were used. Firstly I used a purposive sampling technique in order to identify certain specific participants. Purposive sampling, or judgement sampling technique, is a deliberate choice to find participants due to the qualities they possess. It is a non-random technique where the researcher decides exactly what they need to know and then they set out to find the people who are willing to provide them with that information by virtue of their knowledge or experience (Tongco 2007; Bernard 2011). The participants I identified were individuals or organisations who participated in the Nirbhaya protests or have been associated with long-term gender activism. I created a list of people from online articles published during and after the case where they had been quoted or interviewed or they themselves were the author of the articles. They were then approached with reference to the article, which proved an active interest from the researcher's point of view. I also approached individuals or groups I had been following on various social media channels.

During the first phase of the research, for example, I followed a blog called Kafila.org, which posted several in depth articles on the Nirbhaya case, the protests and discourses on gender emerging from the case. I emailed one of the editors asking if she would be willing to do an interview with me. She had personally participated in the Nirbhaya protest in New Delhi and agreed to do a face-to-face interview with me during my fieldwork in New Delhi. Similarly, I contacted another activist in Mumbai. She has been a part of the women's movement in India since the 1970s and currently she is part of a leading women's NGO in India. I have referenced her work for this research and she had also been an active participant in the activism post Nirbhaya. She also agreed to do a face-to-face interview with me during my fieldwork in Mumbai. However, I was only able to gather a few participants through this technique and many of the individuals or organisations I had contacted did not respond.

Therefore, to gain more participants for this research I used the snowball sampling technique. From the members of the target population who were identified through purposive sampling, I sought information about other potential participants. This gave me the possibility to open up their enquiry and reach out to people who otherwise would not be known to me (Atkinson & Flint 2001). Therefore, as discussed earlier, the research started by following certain individuals or organisations who were vocal after the rape in Delhi on December 16, 2012. These people became the first point of contact for the research. Some of these participants took an active interest and passed on the message to other activists and organisations. Having a recommendation from someone made the process of approaching individuals and organisations much easier since the establishment of trust played a major role in the process of gaining access. Thus, having a blogger or activist send an email or use 'suggest a friend' feature on Facebook helped establish a trust with potential participants who under normal circumstances would not be easily accessible. I also looked at Facebook and Twitter comments and blogrolls in order to find other individuals who were talking about similar issues

The participants for the research consisted of individual and representatives from organisations (political, media or non-governmental organisations) who participated in the protest marches and online activism during and after the Nirbhaya case in India. This was so that I was able to gain an insight on the different online activities during

and after the incident, to explore how collective identities were narrated, frames constructed and resources deployed. This group was further divided into two: people who participated as a part of an organisation and individuals, people who did not belong to any organisation or have any fixed ideologies but came out on the street because they felt strongly towards the cause.

The first stage of interviews consisted of three Skype interviews with people in India between April to July 2014. At this stage I also conducted six face-to-face interviews in London. The first face-to-face interview was with a management consultant working in India who has a long history of working with women's issues and divides her time between India and London. During the Nirbhaya protests she was in New Delhi and participated in some of the protest marches. She was in London when I approached her and she agreed to do an interview with me there. The rest of the interviews in London were with the participants of a play titled 'Nirbhaya', a testimony theatre that was created after the Nirbhaya case in order to raise awareness about sexual violence in India and urging women to break their silence and speak freely about their personal experiences of sexual violence. All members of the cast were victims of sexual violence and had decided to speak about their experience post the Nirbhaya case. They had also participated individually in protests post-Nirbhaya both online and offline.

The second stage of the interview process took place during my fieldwork in India between October 13, 2014 and November 28, 2014. The fieldwork took place in four cities, Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and Kolkata. I had contacted many of the participants before I left for India and set up appointments to meet them on specific dates and times. I established contact with many of the participants online through Facebook, Twitter or personal emails where email ids were available. I often 'friended' people on Facebook or 'followed' them on Twitter in order to establish a more personal relationship. In some cases, I also carried out some informal conversations before the actual interviews through social media or chat in order to know the participants better. This was also done so that participant got to know me as a researcher and was aware of the work I was doing and why. Once I was in India, many of the participants recommended other potential participants and in some case even introduced me to them personally. However, in many case, I found it difficult to reach people without recommendations

from someone. For example, I had written to a particular participant several times before but had received no reply. However, when one of the other participants recommended that I speak to her and send her an introductory email, she responded immediately.

Once I was in India, I realised that it was easier to gain access to participants because of my physical presence there. In some instances, I would call a potential participant and they would ask me to come and see them the same day. After my fieldwork in India, between December 2014 and February 2015, I conducted four more interviews on Skype. Out the four, two participants were in USA and they had organised and participated in specific campaigns in USA post-Nirbhaya to raise consciousness about sexual violence in India. I interviewed them to get an idea of the nature of transnational gender activism post Nirbhaya. The other two participants were activists who were unavailable during my fieldwork in India but had agreed to do online interviews with me once I returned back to UK.

In some cases, I conducted interviews with the same person both online and in-person to get a better understanding of their work. For example, in the first stage of interviews I had done a Skype interview with the co-founder of an organisation in India working with men in order to achieve gender equality. After the interview, he invited me to visit his organisation in Pune to get a better understanding of their work and interact with the people working within the community. Thus, this research accessed populations and spaces both real and virtual, online and offline and there was some significant overlap between the two. There were some informants who were available only in the online space while some others were available in both. Going back and forth from real to virtual and back reduced the dualism of how the online and the offline configure each other (Radsch 2013). The following table gives details of all the interviews conducted. The first table details the interviews conducted with organisations and NGOs. The second table gives details of individual participants. All the interviews with individual participants have been anonymised in order to take into consideration issues about privacy and research ethics.

Table 1: List of Interview with Representatives from Organisations and NGO

Sno.	Name of Participant	Nature of Participation	Date and Location of Interview	Reason for Interviewing
1	Poorna Jagannathan	Actress and Producer. Part of the Nirbhaya play team	7th March 2014, London (face-to-face interview)	Actor, activist, victim of sexual violence, participated in activism post-Nirbhaya and co-conceptualised the Nirbhaya play
2	Yeal Ferber	Internationally acclaimed theatre director and playwright. Creator of the Nirbhaya play	7th March 2014, London (face-to-face interview)	Acclaimed theatre director and playwright, activist, writer and director of the Nirbhaya play
3	Will Muir	Co-founder of Equal Community Foundation	2nd April 2014, Skype Interview	Co-founder of Equal Community Foundation, an organisation that works with men in a community level to achieve gender equality
4	Francesca Tarrant	Communications & Development Associate for Apne Aap	23rd April 2014, Skype Interview	Apne Aap works towards empowering girls and women to resist and end sex trafficking. They participated in the Nirbhaya protests. Tarrant has also worked in women's right organization focusing on domestic and global women's rights.
5	Prukalpa Sankar	Co-founder of Social Cops	21st October 2014, New Delhi (face-to-face interview)	Social Cops aims to power decision making through better data sourced from the grassroots to solve problems facing humanity. They believe in making the world a better place through

				technology and data.
6	Akhil Kumar	Editor of Youth Ki Awaz, Member of two political organisations	21st October 2014, New Delhi (face-to-face interview)	Senior editor for Youth ki Awaz, activist, associated with 2 political organisations: CPI (ML) liberation (Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist) and All India Students Association (ISA). Attended the protests post Nirbhaya as a part of the political parties and took part in online activism
7	Anshul Tiwari	Editor-in-Chief of YouthKiAwaaz.com	21st October 2014, New Delhi (face-to-face interview)	Indian media entrepreneur best known as the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Youth Ki Awaaz. Has used online resources and social media for activism and to create a difference in the country
8	Vani Subramaniam	Activist for Saheli	25th October 2014, New Delhi (face-to-face interview)	Women's rights activist and documentary filmmaker. She is part of Saheli, an organisation that has worked with women since the 1980s. She also has more than 20 years of experience in working in campaigns related to violence against women
9	Harish Sadani	Chief Functionary of Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA)	29th October 2014, Mumbai (face-to-face interview)	Chief Functionary of Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA), India's first organization of Men working towards women's empowerment and preventing gender-

				based violence on girls /women. Championed the cause of participation of men in attaining gender equality and received awards for his contribution towards gender equality. Works with other organisations as a gender consultant and trainer
10	Druv Arora	Founder of GotStared.at	30th October 2014, New Delhi (face-to-face interview)	Founder of GotStared.at, a platform that encourages people to send photo of what they were wearing when they were harassed. Their aim is to address the issues surrounding street harassment and facilitate the creation of a safe space for people to discuss these issues
11	Will Muir and his team	Equal Community Foundation	31st October 2014, Pune (face-to-face interview)	Equal Community Foundation is an organisation that works with men in a community level to achieve gender equality. Spend time with the members of the organisation and community workers in order to understand their work and role of men in gender activism
12	Nandita Ghandi	Acitivist, Co-director of an NGO called Akshara	1st November 2014, Mumbai (face-to-face interview)	Part of the women's movement in India since the 1970s and currently she is part of leading women's NGO called Akshara in India. Used her

				books and papers to gain knowledge about the Indian Women's Movement
13	Gayatri Buragohain	Executive Director - Foundation for Social Transformation (FST), Founder - Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT)	18th Februray 2015, Skype Interview	Activist, helps women's organisations to develop tech support. Believes in attaining gender equality through gaining equity in science and technology. Founder of Feminist Approach to Technology (FAT), a non-profit organisation committed to empowering women through technology and Executive Director of FAT, NGO advocating for women's equal participation in the fields of science and technology.
14	Bishakha Dutta	Executive Director of Point of View	20th February 2015, Skype Interview	Film maker, activist and former journalist. Co-founder and executive director of Point of View, a non-profit organisation working in the area of gender, sexuality and women's rights.
15	CUII members	Cornell USA-India Initiative	22nd November 2014, Skype Interview	Started the emBODYindia campaign in Cornell University to raise consciousness about gender discrimination in India and fight for equality.

Table 2: List of Interviews with Individuals Participants

Sno.	Name of Participant	Nature of Participation and Gender	Date and Location of Interview	Reason for Interviewing
1	Participant 1	Individual (Female)	6th March 2014, London (face-to-face interview)	Participated in the protests post Nirbhaya on the streets of Delhi New Delhi and online
2	Participant 2	Individual (Male)	6th March 2014, London (face-to-face interview)	Theatre artist and activist
3	Participant 3	Individual (Female)	6th March 2014, London (face-to-face interview)	Actor, victim of sexual violence, participated in activism post-Nirbhaya
4	Participant 4	Individual (Female)	7th March 2014, London (face-to-face interview)	Victim of sexual violence, activist and participated in activism post-Nirbhaya
5	Participant 5	Individual (Female)	11th July 2014, Skype Interview	Activist, works with NGOs to help them develop their social media strategies, participated in online activism post-Nirbhaya
6	Participant 6	Individual (Male)	23rd September 2014, Skype Interview	Activist, works as city editor for an award winning online and mobile platform that helps the youth to express themselves on various issues of importance. Participated in activism post-Nirbhaya
7	Participant 7	Individual (Female)	20th October 2014, New Delhi (face-to-face)	Supreme Court Lawyer, gender activist, victim of sexual harassment

			interview)	who spoke about her experience on a blog after the Nirbhaya case.
8	Participant 8	Individual (Female)	22nd October 2014, New Delhi (face-to-face interview)	Teaches political science and gender studies at a reputed women's college in New Delhi, works with students to counsel them on gender equality and sexual harassment. One of the editors of a popular blog that creates a space for critical engagement on a wide range of contemporary issues. Participated in activism post Nirbhaya
9	Participant 9	Individual (Female)	20th of November 2014, Skype Interview	Indian Immigrant. Participated in the #Hokkolorob Movement (Transnational gender movement) in New York. Also regularly participates in online gender activism related to India

To achieve data that is comparable in key ways, a standardised set of questions were used during the interview process. However, certain questions were changed depending upon who the interviewees were and their role in the process of gender activism. Thus in order to generate situational knowledge with all the interviewees, in some cases, I asked different questions to different participants. However, this also depended on the nature of conversation with the participant and I chose this approach to expand more on certain things participants mentioned in the interviews. According to Mason, ‘if you are seeking to maximize the interview’s ability to produce situated knowledge about

processed and experiences ‘outside’ or indeed ‘inside’ it, you will need to be flexible and sensitive to the specific dynamics of each interaction, so that you and your interviewee(s) are effectively, tailor –making each one on the spot’ (Mason 2002: 64). In the process of probing, cues were taken from the on-going conversation to form the next set of questions in order to continue the flow of the narrative in an organic fashion. Such interactions could not be achieved from an entirely pre-scripted set of questions.

2.4 Researching from a Feminist Perspective

Clisby (2001: 104) argues that, ‘feminist analyses have contributed to the problematisation of research practice, to the development of both reflexive and critical approaches to the methodology’. The key feature of a feminist methodology is the concern with gender (Hammersley 1992). Human social relations of all kinds are increasingly structured around the difference in social position of women and men and also by differences between them in power. Hence, gender is a crucial element in all areas of social life and must be taken into account while conducting any analysis (Hammersley 1992). This research specifically investigates the use of ICTs in gender-based activism in India and therefore care has been taken to ensure that all aspects of the research including data collection and analysis are conducted from a feminist perspective.

DeVault (1996) states that consciousness raising was at the core of the women’s movement and the method of consciousness raising provided a tool, a systemic mode of enquiry that helped women to challenge the received knowledge, allowing women to learn from each other. As women in various groups started to talk together, analyse together and act together, it gave rise to an alternate base of knowledge and authority in the community of women and their experiences. DeVault (1996) characterises feminist methodology as a ‘field of enquiry united by membership in these overlapping research communities-bound together not by agreement about answers but by shared commitment to questions’ (DeVault 1996: 30). The idea of consciousness raising and development of knowledge through meaningful discussions and collaborations with the participants is at the heart of this research.

Harding (1987) argues that it is often difficult to answer the question about a distinctive research method because both in traditional and feminist discourses, the discussions on methods and methodology have been intertwined with questions about epistemological issues. So it is important to distinguish between the three. A research method is a technique for gathering evidence, a methodology helps in theorising and analysing how research should be conducted and epistemology is the theory of knowledge and study of what and how we can know (Harding 1987). Harding (1987) further states that all evidence gathering techniques can fall under three main categories: listening to or interrogating informants, observing behaviour or examining historical traces or records and all these above methods have been used by feminist researchers in different ways.

Equality is at the heart of the feminist discourse and while conducting feminist research, it is important to remember that the relationship between the researcher and the researched should be reciprocal and non-hierarchical (Hammersley 1992; Oakley 1981). DeVault (1996) states that feminists have been attracted to interviewing as a method for collecting evidence because of possibilities of directly interacting with the participants. This allows the researcher to talk freely and reciprocally allowing in exchange of ideas and experiences in a non-hierarchical manner (Hesse-Biber 2013). In case of this research, qualitative interviews have been used as a method for collecting data. Even though this research is primarily concerned with women's activism, it takes into account male voices, as men have been an integral process of the activism post Nirbhaya. It is also essential to take into account both men and women's voices in order to have a more complete idea not only about the process of activism but also about the nature of society. If men should be called feminist is a separate debate and it has been discussed to a certain degree in later chapters (see Chapter 5: Nirbhaya and Beyond- The Role of Social Media and ICTs in the gender activism in India) but all men who have interviewed for the research have identified themselves as 'feminists'. One of the participants state, 'even though I am a man, I would call myself a feminist... Because the liberation of the two are tied together. So unless the women are liberated, men can't be' (Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Another common aspect of feminist methodology is the emphasis on the validity of personal experiences (Hammersley 1992). Smith (1987) states that, in sociology, women have often been treated as an 'object rather than subject' and little or no importance is given to their experiences (Smith 1987: 98). She argues that special emphasis must be given not only to the experiences of women but it should become an integral part of the process of analysis. Harding (1989) also argues about the importance of experiences of women and states that experiences of women can provide access to a social reality that is not available to men thus providing 'a more complete and less distorting kind of social experience' (Harding 1987: 184). While speaking to the various participants I encouraged them to share their personal experiences, which became an integral part of the research. Some of their experiences were often very personal. For example, while speaking about reasons for participating and personal attachment to the Nirbhaya protests a participant spoke about her own experience of sexual abuse. She asked me not to record that section of the interview, as she has not publicly shared her experience previously. However, her experience helped me to more deeply understand the reasons for her participation and the way she has been trying to channelise her personal experience into a political one.

2.5 Ethics

While conducting interviews and developing relationships with the participants, this research takes on a deep ethical obligation. Each interview that I conducted was transcribed accurately and after that it was sent back to the participant to check if their words had been correctly represented. Data collected online was archived following an ethical procedure and used only for the purpose of the research. Before the interview, I gave each participant a consent form, which they were requested to complete and sign. The issue of consent has been considered of primary importance. Through the consent form the participant expresses their voluntary participation for the study. They had the right to withdraw from the research at any point. They also have the right to anonymity. The principle of anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, copyright, data sharing and archiving were followed in order to ensure the appropriate confidentiality over the participants' data (Wiles et al. 2008). The subsequent process of analysis and publication would take all these details into consideration. After the completion of the

data analysis, a summary of the findings were also sent to the participants to inform them about the results of the analysed data that they provided.

In the case of anonymity, all participants interviewed gave their consent for their names to be used for the research. However, some of the participants shared some deeply personal stories, which they requested me to keep anonymous. For example, one of the participants spoke about her experience of sexual abuse and how she went to protest to demand a social and legal system that would provide justice for victims like herself. While she consented for her name to be used in the research, she requested her story to be anonymised if I used it. While all individual participants gave consent for their names to be used, revealing their names at any point during the research could compromise their identities. In order to respect the confidentiality of the individual participants and the ethical considerations adopted for this research, no actual names of individual participants have been used when quoting them. No stories of abuse or violence of any kind was also recorded, as requested by the participants.

On the other hand, the names of organisations and NGOs interviewed for this research have been used. The main reason for doing this is that all participants wanted their names to be used because they wanted their views and experiences to be heard. The aim of feminist research is to look at women and help in finding the voices that have been ignored, censored or suppressed and by doing so, help create a fuller and more accurate account of society (Nielsen 1990). Keeping this in mind, the names of participants from organisations and NGOs were revealed in this research. Expressing their view through this research does not impose any threats to their personal or professional lives because all these participants have been very vocal about their views and expressed similar views on various other channels, both mainstream media and social media. They all approved of the transcripts of their interviews and the analysis that was obtained from the data and gave their approval for their names to be used when directly quoting them or expressing their views.

Another factor that I had to take into consideration for this research is the ethical consideration revolving around revealing the name of the victim. Under the Indian

Penal Code Section 228-A the name of the victim cannot be revealed and is a punishable offense (CNN-IBN 2 January 2013). On complying with the law the actual name of the victim was not released by the media and pseudonyms like ‘Damini’ (lighting), ‘Jagruti’ (awareness), Amanat’ (treasure), or most commonly ‘Nirbhaya’ (fearless) were used (CNN-IBN 2 January 2013). However, there was a lot of debate around the issue when the father of the victim said that he would like the name of his daughter to be revealed in order to inspire other sex crime victims (BBC 6 January 2013). Shashi Tharoor, at the time union minister and junior education minister, was also highly criticised by a certain section of the government because of his tweet that said ‘Wondering what interest is served by continuing anonymity of #DelhGangRape victim. Why not name&honour her as a real person w/own identity?’ (The Hindu 2 January 2013). However, the Hindustan Time, a popular Indian daily newspaper, quoted her father saying that he would only allow the name of his daughter to be revealed if the government would name a law after her (BBC 6 January 2013). However, in December 2015, the mother of the victim used her actual name in a public meeting saying that she felt no shame in announcing her daughter’s name (BBC 16 December 2015). However, in order to avoid any confusion, I have not named the victim in this research. Instead I have used the name ‘Nirbhaya’ (fearless), which was one of the most popular pseudonyms being used by the press (Roy 24 December 2012).

2.6 Data Analysis

As discussed earlier, for the purpose of this research two main data collection techniques were employed, qualitative interviews and the netnographic approach. I have considered thematic analysis in order to construct the analytical narrative for this research. It is particularly fitting to use thematic analysis as it is based on an inductive logic for analysing data that begins with an individual case and then seeks to explain and develop patterns within it. According to Radsch (2013), the process of ‘data collection and analysis occurs simultaneously as immersion in the empirical world leads to the creation of analytical categories derived from the data and the continual process of interpretation, creation of abstract conceptual categories and identification of patterns and relationships that emerge from data collection and analysis’ (Radsch 2013: 89). The same approach has been used for the purpose of the research. This nature of collection

and analysis helps in the development of themes. It looked at ‘concepts that interviews frequently mention or indirectly revealed, that emerge from comparing interviews, themes that suggest new concepts, typologies, figures of speech and symbols, stories and labelling’ (Rubin & Rubin 2012).

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke 2006). It organises and describes the data set in rich detail. However, it also often goes further than that and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis 1998). As a first step of thematic analysis, all the data was transcribed in order to get familiarised with the data and find what is interesting about it. The first phase of analysis involved initial coding of the data, which helped in segmentation of the data in meaningful groups. Boyatzis (1998) describes codes as ‘the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon’ (Boyatzis 1998: 63). In the case of this research, the data was approached from both a ‘data-driven approach’ and a ‘theory driven approach’. In the former the themes emerge from the data but in the latter the data needs to be approached with certain questions in mind around which the code would be generated. In order to identify the participants within the Indian women’s movement, the recruitment process, the mobilisation structures, political opportunity structures and framing processes, the data was approached from the theory driven point of view. Otherwise the data was approached from a data-driven point of view in order to explore new emerging themes.

After the completion of the coding phase, the codes were sorted into potential different themes. The codes were analysed carefully to find how different codes combine to form an overarching theme. At this stage a thematic map was created to ‘start thinking about the relationship between codes, between themes and between different levels of themes (e.g., main overarching themes and sub-themes within them)’ (Braun & Clarke 2006: 21). Below is the first thematic map that was constructed.

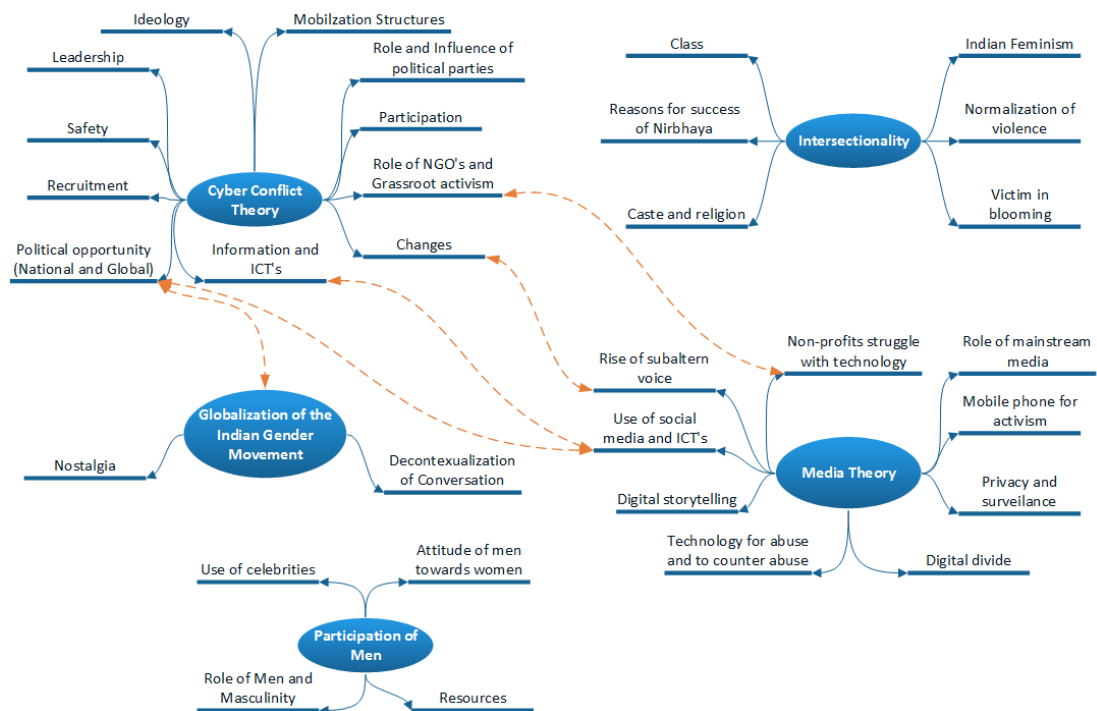


Figure 3: First Thematic Map

After the thematic map was created it needed to be reviewed in relation to the entire data set to confirm if the themes formed a coherent pattern. Otherwise they needed to be reworked to find new themes. The themes were also compared with all the themes that were obtained from the netnographic approach. The final phase of the analysis involved the naming and defining of the themes to make sure that each theme had its own narrative and also that it fit into the broader narrative structure. Below is the final thematic map shows the extended cyberconflict framework with gender elements that were included after the analysis of the data. It was constructed showing all the main themes and the sub themes that will be discussed in this research.

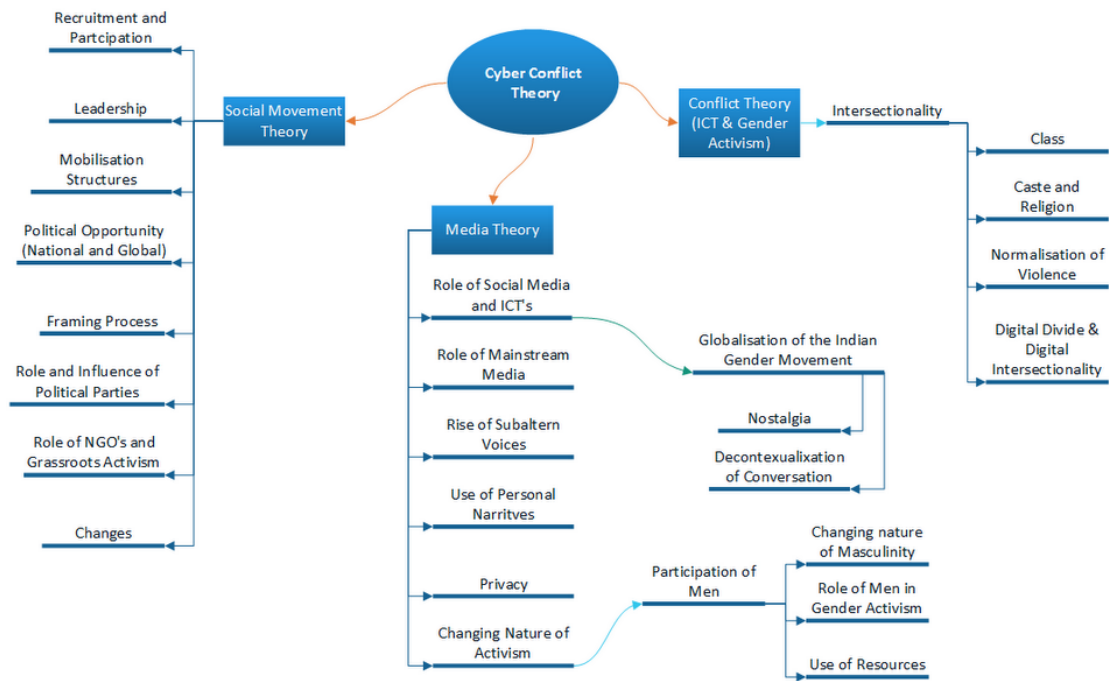


Figure 4: Cyberconflict Framework with Gender Components (Final Thematic Map)

Following the gender sensitive cyberconflict framework that was devised from the analysis of the data, this study has been divided into three main units of analysis: social movement theory, media theory and gender. This approach justifies the sectioning of the analysis into three thematic chapters (chapter 4, 5 and 6) in order to answer the research questions. The data from the interviews was used to further support the analysis displayed in the research in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

2.7 Conclusion

In order to successfully conduct a research it is of the utmost important to establish suitable research stances and research paradigms. In this chapter, I have established the philosophical underpinning and methods that guide the research. This research follows a qualitative methodology that aims to understand complex societal structures and experiences. The Nirbhaya rape case lies at the core of this research. Hence a case study approach has been adopted to fully understand the nature of gender movements and extend our understanding about the use of new digital technology in the field of gender

activism in India. In order for the study to be detailed a multi method approach was adopted for data collection, which includes the netographic approach for collecting online data and qualitative interviews, conducted both online and offline.

The data collection occurred in three phases. In the first phase of the research I collected online data in real time while the protest were happening in India in order to gain detailed knowledge about the nature of the movements and relating it to core cyberconflict theories. In the second phase, I conducted a pilot study prior to the actual fieldwork in order to test the usefulness and effectiveness of the interview guide. In the final phase, I conducted qualitative interviews. These interviews were conducted both online on Skype and during my fieldwork in India. Since this research is deeply rooted in feminist ideologies all aspects of data collection and analysis were conducted from a feminist perspective. Care was taken to understand and respect the experiences of all participants and interviews were conducted keeping in mind the principles of equality. Ethical issues were also of prime importance to this research and the principle of anonymity, confidentiality and privacy were at the core of it.

In the next chapter: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Socio-Political and Media Environment' I discuss briefly the history of the Indian Women's Movement (IWM) from 1970 to recent times. I further develop an understanding of the social, political, economic, media and technological environment of India, within which the contentious activities takes place.

Chapter 3: Brief History of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Sociopolitical and Media Environment

Karatzogianni (2006) on stating the parameters that are essential for analysing cyberconflicts argues the importance of studying the environment of conflict and conflict mapping both in the real and the virtual environment. Hence, any study of cyberconflict and digital dissidence would be incomplete without an account of the sociopolitical, economic, media and technological environment of the country within, which these contentious activities takes place (Olabs 2015). In this chapter, I have drawn a brief history of the Indian Women's Movement (IWM) from 1970 to recent times. I further discuss the media and communication ecology and the development of digital and technological infrastructure in the country taking into context developments in mainstream media and issues related to digital divide and censorship.

In tracing out the history of the IWM this specific time frame from 1970 to recent times has been considered for various reasons. Firstly, in the 1970s India witnessed a series of movements that saw the extensive participation of women. In this period India also witnessed a rise in the formation of several women's organisations across the country, such as the women's trade union or even self-employed women's groups. Secondly, from the late 1970s India witnessed a rise of autonomous women's groups who supported the politics of social reformism and the politics of mobilisation and empowerment. Katzenstein (1989) says that the term feminism in India is largely associated with these autonomous groups.

Thirdly, International occurrences, to a large extent, created an opportunity structure for the development of women's movements in India. The second wave of feminism brought forward different discourses on gender violence and inequalities. The years 1975 -1985 was declared by the UN as the decade for women and the year 1975 was declared as the International Women's Year and because of which the government of India commissioned a report on status of women called 'Towards Equality...' (Kelly & Slaughter 1992). This report played a catalytic role in the emergence of the contemporary women's movement. The report published in 1975 dramatically brought

to attention, not only existing gender inequalities like declining sex ratios but also highlighted inequalities in education, access to health care, income and political representation (Katzenstein 1989). The report mobilised activists and academics alike resulting in a series of conferences related to gender discrimination. Omvedt (1986) states that post 1975 women's movements all over the world emerged as a new force. In the Indian context she says,

Movements in developing countries such as India have witnessed an interaction between the more articulate and more easily organisable urban, middle-class women and the agricultural labourer or poor peasant women. Although international forces have provided ideological stimulation and funding and urban intellectual women have dominated such organizations, it has often been the case that some of the most radical and important issues have been brought forward by the movements of poor women.

(Omvedt 1986: 212)

Finally, in the early 1980s autonomous groups in India brought the issues of sexual violence to the forefront of the feminist agenda. Omvedt (1986) states that the year 1980 can be considered to be an important dividing line in terms of women's movements India. In particular, this research focuses on activism related to sexual violence. Therefore the movements in the 1980s are extremely important to not only see the evolution of the women's activism related to sexual violence but also to see the evolution of the legal system and changes in the sociopolitical circumstances. However, to develop a complete understanding of the activism related to sexual violence in the 1980s, it is important to talk about the activism in the previous decade. Hence, the movements in the 1970s have been taken into consideration. Further, this discussion provides a clear picture of the social, economic and political environment that shaped these movements, which in turn leads to the development of a better understanding of the current gender activism.

3.1 The IWM: Historical Context and Sociopolitical Landscape

Before I discuss about the Indian women's movement (IWM), it is important to distinguish between the different groups who form the women's movements in India. Katzenstein (1989) state the six different types of organisations that shape the IWM. Firstly there are the party-connected women's organisations. Several of the women's organisations in India are associated with or form the women's wing of a larger political party. For example, All Indian Women's Conference (AIWC) is associated with the Congress and the All Indian Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) is connected to the Communist Party of India- Marxist (CPM). Some of these organisations have existed even in pre-independence India and were a part of the nationalist movement. Many of the political parties connected to women's groups, especially the ones associated with Leftist parties, argue that women associated with parties are more effective because of their connection with mass organisations and grassroots activism. They further argue that without them feminist politics would remain largely isolated to the middle class, thus limiting their activities and fields of perception (Katzenstein 1989).

Second are the autonomous women's groups that largely emerged in the late 1970s. These groups were mainly urban. Their memberships were small, ranging between about ten to twenty active members. The main strength of these autonomous groups did not lie in their ability to mobilise large numbers of people, but in their ability to reflect on, name and publicise movement issues. Thirdly there are the grassroots organisations. Grassroots political organisations have formed an important part of the IWM and they have taken up several issues including campaigns to increase wages and end alcoholism and wife beating. Fourth are the women's research institutes that have largely become the home for the studying and researching of women's issues. Many of these institutes are associated with both research and activism. Fifth are the women's developmental organisations, which consist of NGOs working towards enhancing the economic conditions of women workers in the informal sector. Finally, there are voluntary organisations, which include religious, caste, ethnic and non-sectarian organisations that mainly offer services such as job training, legal aid and health care. Though they mainly

work with women on a low income, some of their projects are also aimed at the middle class (Katzenstein 1989).

For the purpose of this research, I have not only considered movements that were specifically organised by women's institutions or concerning with issues related to women but I have also mentioned some other movements that led to mass mobilisation and sociopolitical change that indirectly affected the IWM. It was important to consider these movements in order to understand the sociopolitical environment of the time that shaped the simultaneously occurring women's movements. Some of these movements have also been mentioned because of the large number of women participants. I have tried to show the role and the nature of participation of women within these particular movements (eg: the Naxalbari Movement). This is to extend our understanding and comparison of the participation and role of women within the social movement environment.

This is also important to establish that in social movements the experiences of women and men can be completely different. This further justifies the necessity of examining the cyberconflict framework through the lens of gender and extending it in order for it to include the experiences of women. In this chapter, I further trace out the changing media environment in India in order to fully understand the use of ICTs and social media for gender activism in India

3.1.1 Pre-Independence vs. Post-Independence Feminism

The women's movement in India does not really have any specific beginning or origin (Gandhi & Shah 1992). Violence against women is a reality that many Indian women have faced across generations. The women's movement in India can be traced back to when social reformists like Raja Rammohan Roy started challenging the Hindu traditions and campaigned against the ban of Sati, the custom of immolation of a Hindu widow in the funeral pyre of the deceased husband. After his campaign in 1829, a legal act was set up in British India, which made the act of Sati illegal (Philips 1977). Raja

Rammohan Roy with a group of educated social reformist men of that time also campaigned to change the education system, including women's education and other issues relating to the liberation of women in Indian society. Other men like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar also championed the cause of liberation of Indian women. In the nineteenth century, mostly men conducted the campaigns relating to reforming the conditions, under which women lived in the Indian society (Chopra 1993). The woman's movement largely developed because of male associational politics in the late nineteenth and the twentieth century in India (Chopra 1993). By the late nineteenth century the wives, daughters, relatives, protégées, sympathisers and others affected by the campaigns, joined in and led to the growth of the IWM. However, it wasn't until the early twentieth century that women's own autonomous organisations started to form (Gandhi & Shah 1992).

India gained her independence from the British rule on August 15, 1947. Post-colonial India saw a series of conflicts. The independence of India led to the splitting up of the huge British colony into two states: the larger secular state of India and smaller Muslim state of Pakistan. The partition or the 'great Indian divide', as it is called, led to a series of ethnoreligious conflicts across the Indo- Pakistan border, which continues even now. For the next couple of decades the Congress Party ruled over India, which became a republic of its own constitution in 1950 and the equality between sexes was guaranteed by the constitution of India (Glück 2 August 2008).

There was huge difference between the ideologies of the feminist movement in pre-independence and post-independence India. In the early twentieth century pre-independent India it was more or less taken for granted that the difference between sexes was such that their roles, functions, aims and desires were different. The reformists emphasised rationalising of the family and creation of the archetypical mother figure. This period also saw the symbolic use of the 'mother' as a rallying device to create symbols of the women's power or even the spirit of endurance and suffering embodied in the mother (Kumar 1993). Even Mahatma Gandhi, who on many occasions has been referred to as a parent of the IWM, said that sexes were different and complementary. Pre-Independent feminists, to a certain extent, accepted the gender-

based definitions of themselves and even largely accepted the sexual divisions of labour (Kumar 1993).

Post-independence feminism saw a huge shift in ideology. The image of the mother was replaced with that of the daughter and the working women, with emphasis on economic independence of women. As Kumar (1993) states, 'the former focused on the formation of a woman, rather than her role; the later looked at her productive rather than her reproductive capabilities' (Kumar 1993: 2). They rallied against the unequal wages offered to women, women being used as 'unskilled' labours and also addressed the area of domestic labour. Kumar (1993) further states that 'the experience of colonial rule was one of the most important formative influences on the feminist movement of the early twentieth century, whereas an equivalent influence on contemporary feminism has been the experiment of democracy in post-independence India' (Kumar 1993: 1). However, it is not that the pre and post-independence women's movement have no continuity or connections. The roots of the IWM lies in the former, but the distinctions between the two are made in the context of this continuity.

3.1.2 The Sociopolitical Movements in the 1970s and Rise of Women's Organisations

The sixties and seventies saw various protests and movements throughout the world and India was no exception. In the backdrop of such turmoil, an event in a remote village in Bengal forever transformed the history of left-wing extremism in India (Kujur 2008). In the remote village of Naxalbari, in the north of Bengal, started a rebellion against feudal landlords that swiftly spread to various parts of India. Thousands of young students were involved in the movement and hundreds were killed or put behind the bars (Singh 1995). The city of Calcutta became the battlefield of ideology where hundreds came to the streets to protest against oppression and corruption. This movement was completely different from other youth movements the country had witnessed in the past. The Naxal leaders urged the youth to 'repudiate the path of capitulation to the bourgeois education system and integrate themselves with the workers, and the landless peasants' (Mukhopadhyay 17 August 2006). Responding to this call, many students left Calcutta and went to the villages.

The importance of mentioning this movement lies in the fact that the Naxalbari movement saw the participation of a large number of women. Most women joined the movement as students, often through their prior association with politics or through a politically active brothers, male friends or politically active families. This was the first time in post-independence Bengal that young middle-class or lower middle-class women left the confines of domestic life to freely move across the urban or rural landscape. The women within the movement led 'exalted lives of courage and adventure while still performing the everyday labour of care and feminised domesticity. The banal vulnerabilities of daily life continued to constitute the unseen, often unspoken, backgrounds of such a heroic life' (Roy 2007: 189).

However, political labour within the movement was severely gendered, and any female presence was completely absent from the senior positions of leadership within the Naxal movement. Female cadres were mostly designated with technical jobs like transportation of papers, arms and information. Some women did organisational work. However, very few women were actually involved in any frontline fighting. Several women within the movement critiqued the party, especially their male colleagues, who confined them to subsidiary roles and marginalised them from the revolutionary culture within the movement. Middle-class and upper middle class women within the movement were disadvantaged by the virtue of both their gender and class, and yet men from the same class did not have to undergo such discrimination. As Roy (2007: 195) states, 'the division of political labour, the separation of political space was both gendered and an effective process of gendering'. Women were isolated from the countryside because of their biological differences and often asked not to leave home. The political space was divided into 'danger zones' and 'safe zones' and women were only confined to the safe zones due to their vulnerability to sexual violence. Further, women cadres with children received no support from the party and maternal feelings and the image of the mother were claimed to be counterrevolutionary (Roy 2007).

However, 'what was generally perceived by Indians as well as Chinese Communist revolutionaries as the final enactment of the revolution, in reality, proved to be no more

than a dress rehearsal' (Kujur 2008: 3). At the end of the movement, political shelters were reinstated and women were expected to go back to their regular duties as daughters and wives. The movement created little difference for both women in society and for women involved in the movement. Some women continued to be associated with political parties and other autonomous organisations but for several women it meant going back to reality after an illusion of a free and adventurous life (Roy 2007).

In the 1970s, several places in India witnessed the formation of women's organisations. The first attempt to start a women's trade union was established in Ahmedabad in Gujarat by Gandhian socialists associated with the Textile Labour Association (TLA). In 1972, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was formed. It was an organisation of women who worked in different informal sectors but were bound together by a common experience of extremely low earning, poor working conditions, oppression at the hand of authority and a lack of recognition of their work as socially useful labour (Roy 2007). The aim of SEWA was to address all these conditions through training, technical support and collective bargaining.

In 1973, Mrinal Gore, a leader from the Socialist Party and Ahilya Ranganekar a leader from CPI-M (Communist Party of India- Marxist), together with many other women formed the United Women's Anti-Price Rise Front to mobilise women against inflation. The movement grew rapidly and became a large scale movement demanding that both the price and the distribution of essential commodities be fixed by the government. Many housewives joined the movement and women protesting by beating thalis (metal plates meant for eating) with rolling pins became a symbol of the movement. It was originally a student movement however it soon turned into a huge middle class movement joined by thousands of women.

In spite of the participation of extensive numbers of women in these movements, many feminists have questioned if these movements actually challenged the systems of patriarchy. As Kumar (1993) argues, 'their use of a gender defined sign of contempt, offering bangles to men to signify their womanly unworthiness for public office, would seem to reinforce rather than challenge patriarchal stereotypes' (Kumar 1993: 104).

However, since this movement resulted in the collective public action of women it can be regarded as posing an implicit threat to patriarchy. Another group that was formed was the Progressive Organisation of Women (POW) in Hyderabad, which has often been considered as the first women's group of the contemporary women's movement in India. The POW comprised mainly of women from Maoist backgrounds and they did a complete analysis on gender oppression making vital connections between ideas of feminism and ideas of equality (Mies 1998). Their comprehensive manifesto gave an indication of the new wave of feminism yet to come.

3.1.3 The Anti-Rape and Anti-Dowry Movement

Post 1977 India witnessed the start of a new wave of the IWM. The new feminist groups were aware of the torture and rape of women by authority like the police and the landlords. Previously Maoist women's groups in India had also protested against such cases. In 1978 when new feminist groups were just in the process of formation, the case of Rameezabee was reported. This case of police rape was taken up by several of the feminist organisations and such issues received special significance. In 1978, Rameezabee and her husband were returning from the cinema when she was arrested on charges of prostitution and then raped by a group of policemen. Her husband, a rickshaw puller, was murdered by being brutally beaten up by the police when he tried to protest. This incident sparked severe anger amongst the people of the city (Kannabiran 1996). Though this case received substantial media attention, some of the core issues of this particular case became side-lined as the agitation grew. Gandhi & Shah (1992: 39) remarked that 'the Rameezabee case will be remembered as a particularly grotesque rape; for the fantastically arrogant and cunning police cover-up, for the sexism and blindness of the court's judgement and the spontaneity of public protest'. The enquiry commission declared that the policemen were guilty but later they were acquitted by the Session Court (Kannabiran 1996). A few feminist groups came out and protested and went on to appeal against the verdict in the higher courts.

In June 1980 the rape of Maya Tyagi, a 23 year old woman from a well-to-do farmer's family was reported. When Maya was teased and taunted on the street by two

policemen, her husband and his friend retaliated in order to protect her. In response to this action the police fired at them, killing the husband. They then dragged Maya out of the car, brutally beat her up, robbed her of all her ornaments, stripped her naked and paraded her in the marketplace. She was then dragged to the police station and raped. In their defence the police claimed that they had shot three armed robbers (Sahai 1981). After much pressure, the government set up a one-man-commission headed by P.N Ray to investigate the incident. The report presented by Ray accepted the fact that Maya's husband and friends were killed and framed as robbers. The report also accepted that the police dragged Maya out of the car and stripped her. But the commission asserted that Maya was not raped by the police (Sahai 1981). Women's groups across India took up the issue of police/landlord rape and many demonstrations and rallies were held across the country.

However, campaigns against these incidents remained as isolated events until, in 1980, an open letter was published by four senior lawyers against a judgement that was passed in the case of a police rape in Maharashtra, Western India (Baxi et al. 16 September 1978). This letter sparked a huge campaign that united feminist organisations across the country. This open letter was in connection to a rape case that had occurred in 1972. A young tribal Dalit (untouchable) girl called Mathura, aged between 14 and 16 (her actual age was not known), was gang raped in the police station. Under pressure from her family and other villagers a case was registered in the police station against the accused policemen. When taken to court, the policemen were acquitted on the grounds that she had previous sexual intercourse with her boyfriend, which made her non-virtuous. The judge said, 'she was used to having sex and must have consented to the police...She claimed rape so that she would appear virtuous to her lover' (Basu 2013).

The case was later taken to the High Court where the accused were punished with one and five years of imprisonment. However, later the verdict of the High Court was reversed by the Supreme Court on grounds that she had a boyfriend and was thus 'loose' and could not by definition, be raped (Keira 27 January 2015). The Court said that there was no reasonable evidence that the policemen were guilty, as there were no visible marks on injury on her body or no signs on the men's body to show that she

resisted rape. (Basu 2013). The open letter was to protest this decision of the Supreme Court.

In protest against this incident, in January 1980, the Forum Against Rape (FAR), a women's organisation, was formed in Mumbai, which later came to be known as the Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW) in order to fight against violence against women (Chehat 2015). They decided to campaign for the reopening of the case and called for feminist organisations across India to join them in demonstrations across the country on March 8, 1980 International Women's Day. They demanded a retrial of the case, implementation of different sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and changes in the law against rape. This was one of the first times that feminist groups across the country came together in a co-ordinated campaign. In major cities like Delhi and Mumbai, joint action committees were formed, which comprised of mainly feminist groups, socialist and communist party fronts and students, to co-ordinate the campaign (Mondal n.d.). This marked a new stage in the development of feminism in India.

However, the campaign faced several difficulties, the most important, of which being the problem of co-ordinating such a massive campaign with limited resources and lack of quick and efficient modes of communication between distant regions. Nandita Gandhi is a feminist activist and she participated in the protests after the Mathura case. In her interview with me she talks about the importance of communication within a movement and says that she wished technology like mobile phones, social media and emails existed during that time because it would have made the process of communication so much easier (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). Organisations across India kept in touch with each other through letters and phone calls. However, phone calls were a laborious process because it had to go through an operator and then be connected. Gandhi further states that a good campaign was going on in about four to five cities. However, because of the difficulty in communication, activist would only keep in touch with people who were really motivated depending on 'levels of commitment, understanding and readiness for action' (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

Soon after the formation of FAR, protest marches against police rape were held all over the country. All these protests received reasonable media coverage. As a result of the substantial interest from the press, the issue of police rape was acknowledged in a new way in India. The kind of press coverage the incidents received made it an issue of political significance and was widely debated in the House of Parliament. In a short span of time, the campaign was not only joined by centre-right political parties, but controlled by them (Kumar 1993). Thus, when a politician resigned from his party and went on hunger strike, the government decided to amend existing laws on rape. The Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act 1983 was introduced based on the suggestions made by feminist groups to the commission. The major part of the amendment concentrated on defining the category of custodial rape and also added the categories of mass and gang rape to that of individual rape cases. The bill laid down a mandatory ten years punishment for custodial rape and the onus of proof was shifted to the accused. It also codified distinctions between different categories of rape (Wright 9 January 2013).

However, there were several drawbacks to the campaign, one of which was that it ran out of steam quickly. According to Kumar (1993), the highly publicised nature of the campaign, the rapidity at which it turned into a mainstream political issue and the fact that it began with a joint action rather than developing into it, all led to its downfall (Kumar 1993). One of the major problems was the nature of the issue itself and the kind of social sanction accorded to rape. In a country like India, sophisticated medical technologies are available only in big cities, which make the collection of evidence increasingly difficult. However, this was the first time a joint action committee was set up for a feminist cause that opened doors for future projects. It was also the first time that rape was dragged out of the closet and people came to understand the nature and extent of the crime. Most importantly it introduced custodial rape as a distinct category in the law.

In the same time as the Mathura's case, feminists and women's groups in Delhi investigated a few cases of death of young women that had been termed as 'suicide' or 'accident' and discovered that they were actually cases of murders committed by husbands and in-laws. A coalition of more than 30 women's groups started protesting and received extensive press coverage. One of the first cases that got publicity in terms

of dowry murder was the case of Tarvinder Kaur, a 24 year old newlywed Sikh wife. After months of constant pressures from her in-laws for providing money for the expansion of her husband's business, she died. In spite of mentioning in her dying declaration that her mother-in-law and sister-in-law set her on fire, the incident was registered as a suicide. Angered by this, a group of women set up a group called Stree Sangharsh (women's struggle) for a demonstration. Several local residents joined in the march to Tavinder's in-laws house shouting slogans and demanding punishments (Kumar 1993).

When the anti-dowry campaign started, it was based around the tactics of humiliating the in-laws and husbands alongside a social boycott. However, it also emphasised the larger cause of raising consciousness. Several seminars, poster competitions, debates and plays were organised to educate people about the cause. Women's groups also demanded a complete overhaul to the existing laws on dowry, which at the time was immensely inadequate giving the benefit of doubt to the accused in most cases. There had been very little effort by the police or the courts 'to understand the character of the crime, its invisibility, the personal nature or indeed to empathise with the situation of women' (Gandhi & Shah 1992: 56).

The other question for feminists to consider was why women of higher castes, classes and even those from economically independent backgrounds chose to kill themselves in dowry related issues. Many feminists also questioned the practice of marriage and how it was perceived by society. Some felt that the custom of marriage was a way of reducing the families' economic liability while others said that it was the regulation of the woman and man's sexuality. However, for a common woman, marriage symbolised duty and responsibility and many considered being humiliated and ridiculed a part of their 'duty' leading to the normalisation of the violence. Many feminists were surprised to find that the bride's maternal family knew about her ill-treatment and their first advice would be to adjust or compromise (Gandhi & Shah 1992). In very few cases women would be advised to leave their husbands. After marriage, a woman was expected to follow a certain code of conduct, which often confined her in a world of humiliation and compromise. It is very difficult for a woman to walk out of this

situation due to lack of alternatives, such as not getting support of her maternal family, lack of financial independence, societal humiliation and children.

In 1988, an experiment called Project Help was conducted by the Mumbai Police, hospitals and women's organisations to note down the dying declarations of burn victims. The women working for Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW) soon realised that very few women actually wanted to implicate their husbands and in-laws. Even in their dying moments they would carry on their duties and teach their families a lesson by demonstrating their commitment till the end. The experiment did not continue for long and the organisation realised that intervention was required much before the death of the victims. After many of these campaigns the government responded positively and amended the Criminal Law to introduced Section 498, which made cruelty by the husband or any of his cognisable family members, a non-bail-able offense with a maximum punishment of three years and a fine. The definition of cruelty, which was earlier confined to grave physical injuries now also encompassed harassment and mental injury (Gandhi & Shah 1992).

However, these campaigns against rape and dowry taught the feminist movements that there was no connection between the enactment and implementation of laws. This made them think about their modes of protest and their work in general and many of the feminists actually moved away from the regular forms of protest like demonstrations, public campaigns and street theatres. They developed a more intimate and personal approach to their work. In the early 1980s women's centres were formed in cities across India, which provided different services like legal aid, health care and counselling. Women's centres existed before but the new ones set up in the eighties were quite different in many ways. In contrast to the old centres, they attempted to help with a wide range of issues that they felt were interlinked. They had a more complete idea about women's health. They not only advised women on all gynaecological problems but also helped women to understand and treat their bodies better. The new centres were more flexible with an individual approach and most importantly they put an effort to develop a feeling of sisterhood within the practice.

Many centres even chose names that suited their changed attitudes. For example the name chosen for the centre in Delhi was Saheli (girlfriend). Many of these centres used different creative approaches like music and dancing to create an environment of celebration and sisterhood. These methods helped many women who were less articulate to participate and also helped to cut across class barriers developing whole new personal relationships within the movement. However, many have said that these friendships have remained unequal in terms of middle class women acting from the sense of duty and poor women acting from a sense of gratitude (Kumar 1993: 145).

3.1.4 Personal Law and Communal Identities

In India the family is the single most important structure that affects the life of women. In the nineteen eighties, feminists started to explore questions about the role of the women within the family including questions of divorce, maintenance and inheritance. In India, family law is differentiated on the basis of religion and community. The issue of personal law became an especially controversial issue after the ‘Shah Bano Case’. The Shah Bano case began with a woman called Shah Bano Begum demanding maintenance from her husband in accordance to the Indian law after her divorce on grounds that she was old and unable to work. In other words, to claim support, under section 125 of the law she had to prove that she was a destitute. This case was escalated to the Supreme Court, which ultimately resulted in the passing of a new legislation by the Parliament. This case pitted Indian secular law against Muslim law creating dispute among Muslim intellectuals, dividing women’s organisations and providing fuel for Hindu nationalism (Singer 2012).

Feminists started a campaign all over India to publicise the upholding of Section 125, which talks about maintenance provided to wives and children in case of separation and to demand improvements of the legal rights of Muslim women against polygamy and their rights to maintenance. The case occurred in the 1980s when India witnessed a steep rise in communal violence, not only Hindu-Muslim violence but also Hindu-Sikh violence. Hence, to regain the trust of the Muslim voters the Congress party (the then ruling party) introduced the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill that

excluded divorced Muslim women from the purview of Section 125, stating that after the divorce the husband only had to provide them maintenance for a three months period, after which their families would have to support them, or failing this their local Waqf Board (A board that works towards management, regulation and protection of properties donated for Muslim religious or charitable purposes) would have to take responsibility. On announcement of this bill, several women's organisation gathered outside the Parliament House to protest. Organisations campaigned in the form of organising public meetings, demonstrations and lobbying. Unlike the anti-rape or anti-dowry campaign, the campaign against the bill was not carried out under any joint action umbrella. Instead a series of different identities and blocs appeared, constituted separately for each form of opposition (Kumar 1993).

Several coalitions were formed between different autonomous women's groups to put together a signature petition against the bill. Different groups represented different strands of the opposition. Due to the sociopolitical condition of the country many Muslims who opposed the Bills previously and demanded changes in personal laws, now ardently supported it. The Muslims who still opposed the bill, were impelled to form ranks within their community. The Committee for the Protection of the Rights of Muslim Women, a platform formed just to oppose the Bill, limited their membership to Muslim only, allowing Muslim men to join the group but not non-Muslim feminists. This was a difficult decision for many autonomous women's groups because this legitimised the idea that a religious community could define women's right confirming that as women were divided and differentiated by class, caste and community so should be their rights.

However, the bill gave women the right to gain maintenance from the Waqf Board, compensating for the maintenance that they were no longer entitled to. Directly after the bill was passed a large number of women, in both lower and higher court judgments were granted much higher sums of maintenance payable by Waqf boards. However there were some issues that feminists had to consider that would shape the feminist movements in the future. After this case, it was important to understand what secularism meant to the state and how it related to religious freedom. The second question to consider was the question of representation or representativeness. It was argued that the

personal laws did not represent the 'real' desires of a 'real' women (Kumar 1993). In case of women's movements, the needs of women are often overshadowed by the discourse concerning the community. After this movement women were given a newly constructed face of 'real women' positioning them in contrast to the feminist, a distinction that was made for the first time in the contemporary IWM (Kumar 1993).

3.1.5 Sexual Harassment Law

On September 22, 1992 Bhanwari Devi, a dalit (untouchable) women from a poor potter's family in Bhatner and small village in Rajasthan in Western India was gang raped by five upper caste men from the same village. At that time Bhanwari Devi was working as a saathin (friend), a grassroots worker for the Women's Development Project run by the government of Rajasthan (Rawal 24 December 2012). In 1992, the 41 year old Bhanwari Devi, as a part of her work, tried to convince the influential Gurjar community not to get their one year old daughter married. The police also intervened and tried to stop the marriage. Irrespective of that the child marriage took place the next day and the Bhanwari family were boycotted by the villagers socioeconomically as she was held personally responsible for the police intervention (Kurup 7 May 2006). She was even asked to leave the village but she refused on the grounds that she had not done anything wrong. In order to teach her a lesson and as a punishment for her defying the accepted cultural norms prevalent in society, on September 22, 1992 she was gang raped in front of her husband by five upper caste men from the same village.

The police initially refused to record her statement saying that her rape allegations were false because she was too unattractive to be raped by young men. However, pressure from various women's groups and civil rights organisation forced the government to order a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (The national investigation agency for investigation and collection of criminal intelligence information), which found all the allegations made the Bhanwari Devi to be true (Kurup 7 May 2006). Her trial started two years later in a lower court and after five judges were inexplicably changed during the trial the sixth judge in 1995 found the accused to be not guilty. The court said that the delay in filing her report and obtaining a medical examination meant that she was

fabricating the story (The Hindu 4 March 2001). They also said that since she was a Dalit (untouchable), upper caste men, including a Brahmin (the highest caste) could not have had raped her (Desai 30 December 2003). The judge also made other observations like ‘a man could not possibly have participated in a gang rape in the presence of his nephew and that her husband couldn’t possibly have watched passively as his wife was being gang raped — after all, had he not taken marriage vows, which bound him to protect her?’ (Vij 13 October 2007).

In 2002, Activist and People's Union for Civil Liberties chief in the state of Rajasthan, Kavita Srivastava, who had been at the forefront of the campaign to get justice for Bhanwari said that, ‘it's the 10th year of that appeal and not a single hearing has taken place yet’ (Kurup 7 May 2006). Bhanwari Devi has received several national and international honours but till date she is still waiting for justice. Two of the five accused have passed away and the remaining three families claim that the case has been closed.

After Bhanwari Devi’s case, five NGOs working in the field of women’s empowerment filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Supreme Court to enact laws that would criminalise sexual harassment in the workplace. In *Vishakha vs. the State of Rajasthan*, in 1997 the Supreme Court issued guidelines that would broadly define sexual harassment at the workplace and made it mandatory for corporations and business establishments to have committees against sexual harassment (Vij 13 October 2007). It was also the first authoritative judgement by the Supreme Court on sexual harassment in the workplace in India. The Vishakha Guidelines define sexual harassment as anything that would place a woman in a disadvantageous position as compared to her male colleagues in her official career just because of her gender. ‘Unwelcome sexually determined behaviour & demands from males employees at workplace, such as: any physical contacts and advances, sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography, passing lewd comments or gestures, sexual demands by any means, any rumours/talk at workplace with sexually coloured remarks about a working woman, or spreading rumours about a woman’s sexual relationship with anybody’ (Firstpost India 21 November 2013) were all considered as sexual harassment.

The guidelines also stated that the complaints committee in all workplaces must be headed by women and not less than half its members must be women. All complaints regarding sexual harassment must be directed to the committee and they would simultaneously advise the victim on their further course of action and recommend to the management the course of action to be undertaken against the accused. This is important because the immediate supervisor can be perpetrator as well (Firstpost India 21 November 2013). The Vishaka guidelines also stated that a safe working environment and full dignity are fundamental rights of working women and in no way should women be discriminated in her work place as every woman has an inalienable right to work. Gender equality must include the right to work with dignity and protection from sexual harassment as per the construction and extra hazard faced by men compared to women is a clear violation of the fundamental rights of gender equality and right to life and liberty (Firstpost India 21 November 2013).

In May 2013, Bhanwari Devi was asked to speak in a meeting organised by the Alternative Law Forum in Bangalore, South India where she spoke about how the Vishka guidelines have helped grassroots workers. She said that she found the whole effort to be futile and of no help to women. The Vishakha guideline might have affected larger organisations but on the grassroots levels, from which this guideline generated, nothing much changed (Halabol 20 May 2013). The saathins are the lowest rung in the Women's Development Programme and their job is to act as a bridge between the government and the masses. They also have the task of raising consciousness against social evils like dowry, child marriage and sex selection, which are extremely prevalent in the villages with deeply entrenched feudal, class and patriarchal structures. They continue to work in terrible conditions for a remittance of Rs. 1600 (about 16- 20 GBP) per month. Bhanwari Devi has worked for a government organisation all her life and her ideas of change were focused on 'individual effort, collective action and non-government efforts' (Halabol 20 May 2013). Clearly, over the years, she had lost faith in the government that failed to give her justice.

3.1.6 ICTs and Social Media: The Start of a New Phase in IWM

In February 2009, the Pink Underwear Campaign marked a new phase in the IWM. It was started by a Facebook group called ‘Consortium of Pub-Going, Loose and Forward Women’ to protest against the attacks on women in Mangalore, a Southern India city, by conservative Hindu activists (Mishra 19 February 2009). An Indian television crew captured these attacks on camera. The scene of young women in a pub in Mangalore being beaten up by men with the excuse that they were going against the representation of women in traditional Hindu culture, enraged the nation (Banerji 2010). A Facebook page was created to protest against the issue and thousands of enraged young men and women joined the campaign to protest the dignity and freedom of women in independent, progressive India. Promod Mutalik who headed the Ram Sena, a right wing Hindu group, made a clear statement about their party’s dislike of the young, pub going women. They blamed it on the westernisation of the Hindu society, which according to them, had led to the younger generation of India not being in touch with their roots and culture. Ram Sena also issued threat statements saying that if couples were seen celebrating Valentine’s Day they would be punished (Mishra 19 February 2009).

To protest against this, the ‘Consortium of Pub-Going, Loose and Forward Women’ started a campaign where they urged people from all over the country to send pink underwear on Valentine’s day to Pramod Mutalik’s office. Pink was chosen due to the frivolous nature of the colour (BBC 10 February 2009). The cause snowballed and got extraordinary response from people all over the country. This was the first time activism in this form took place in India and the rest of the world took notice of it as well. In an interview with the BBC, Nisha Susan who was a spokesperson from the group said that, by encouraging people to go out on Valentine’s Day or go to pubs they were not supporting the high consumption lifestyle. They were actually against people who took this as an excuse to control women’s actions. She also went on to say that they wanted to maintain the sense of humour and levity in the campaign as a satirical mockery towards people responsible for such unacceptable behaviour and also to maintain the unexpectedness of the campaign (BBC 10 February 2009).

Several other organisations including women's organisations, lawyers and students got involved in the movement against Hindu conservative communalism and their production of a monolithic idea of Hindu traditions. They claimed that violence was not supported anywhere the Indian culture and it was shameful that people who claimed to be such strong supporters of this culture resorted to violence to uphold the flag of Indian traditions. They also stood against the discrimination between men and women as Ram Sena supporters did not object to men visiting pubs (Noronha 3 March 2009).

This can be referred to as one of the first digital activism campaigns in India that gained such massive support. Combining Facebook with a ludicrous idea helped to engage a huge section of the young Indian population who were spending a large portion of their time online and especially on various social media platforms. Campaigning on a platform where the youth had discovered a new comfort helped to push the movement forward (Noronha 3 March 2009). The media impact, both national and international, was also huge and the sensationalisation of the issue by the media was utilised by the group very positively resulting in the radical growth of the movement.

3.2 Mainstream Media and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in India

The power of television in an Indian society cannot be ignored. The number of households owning television in India reached 168 million in 2014, implying a penetration of 61 per cent and making India the world's second largest television market after China. The number of cable and satellite subscriptions also increased by 10 million in 2014 reaching 149 million (KPMG 2015). Besides cable television the two other ways of accessing satellite television are the Direct-to-Home (DTH) service, which requires the users to invest in a mini dish antenna or a set-top-box (STB), which requires consumers to connect a box to their television sets in order to view satellite channels. The other platform is the Internet Protocol (IP) television, which delivers television signals over a broadband connection. However, it requires a substantial

amount of investment and the availability of a personal computer and that has limited subscriptions of IP televisions to only 1 million by 2011 (Mani 15 March 2013).

The early 2000s saw the launch of news television channels in India and from then onwards it grew rapidly. The mid-2000s saw a proliferation of news channels in various languages including business news channels first in English and then in Hindi. This rapid growth of television news channels remained completely unhindered by the global recession. The year 2009 also saw a growth in regional news channels to about 3.4 percent of all Indian television viewership from 2.6 percent of all Indian viewership in 2008. Irrespective of the language barrier, the number of paid cable and satellite news channels displayed a huge amount of growth over the last five years. L.V Krishnan, CEO of TAM Media Research stated in an interview that, ‘to some extent, the scene has changed with the customer exercising the option of watching what he wants to see’ (Parathasarathi & Srinivas 2012: 20).

It has also been noted that in urban areas the viewership of television news shoots up during state elections, terror attacks, social/political protests and for crime stories (Parathasarathi & Srinivas 2012). One of the earliest evidences of this was found on May 16, 2008 when news channels all over the country were flooded with the images of a murdered girl, which suspected involvements of her well-to-do family. Research revealed that during this case, the Television Rating Point (TRP) for Hindi news channels jumped about two points. In 2011, during the two weeks of the anti-corruption movement (see Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework), the viewership of Hindi news channels increased by about 40% compared to its average daily viewership (Raman 11 September 2011).

Due to this great amount of competition from rival 24 hour news channels and the ever-changing nature of news, journalists are more pressured than ever before to find news that has a big appeal to the audience. Since most of the views for digital news formats are from larger towns and cities, there is also a constant effort from the side of journalists to find stories that will be appealing to them. For example, crimes affecting middle class citizens have high amounts of viewership and often aired in a ‘breaking

news' format, which ensures constant updates of even minor or peripheral developments (Parathasarathi & Srinivas 2012).

Largely due to the speed of digitisation and the increased competition, breaking news has become a latest trend for almost all news channels. This trend involves journalists trying to source quick news from fewer sources, which often leads to compromising the quality of news. The emphasis of the industry on breaking the news first means that the journalists and the news channels have limited opportunity to crosscheck details of the story (Roy 2011). Shrikanth Pratyush, owner and editor of a local news channel called PTN explained how he developed new ways to obtain content for his channel. He encouraged local unemployed and underemployed youth of the city of Patna (a city in Eastern India) to wait outside his office to be dispatched to the site of breaking news events with an office camcorder. All they needed was a motorcycle and the willingness to wait outside the office for the opportune moment (Roy 2011).

Digitisation has helped investigative journalism in several ways since a plethora of information is available online. It has become increasingly simple for journalists to trace people using online directories or getting different facts and figures using websites. Even though a huge amount of information is available online, very few journalists have been trained or have the time to filter enormous amounts of information or even authenticate information. Krishna Prasad, editor of Outlook and an active blogger commented, 'a journalist gets a piece of 'secret' paper—a letter, part of a report, or a confidential memo—or an unsubstantiated CD and runs with the story. There is no effort to authenticate the information, gauge its macro implications, and do reporting around it to make the story more credible' (Parathasarathi & Srinivas 2012: 69). Therefore, while on one hand, digitisation has increased the pace of news flow, on the other it has also increased the scope for mistakes. In March 2012, a constitutional bench of five judges was set up by the Supreme Court of India to frame specific guidelines for the reportage of court proceedings (Kanekal 13 March 2012).

Journalists who find it difficult to publish their stories have resorted to alternate media platforms like blogs. Krishna Prasad who also runs a blog called Churumuri.wordpress.com commented,

The blogs are quite different from what we write in print or air on news channels. This is because blogs can generally be longer as there are no space constraints, are irreverent as their readership comprises younger people, have the flexibility to include hyperlinks, audios and videos because of technology, and talk about issues that might be considered sensitive by organizations.

(Parathasarathi & Srinivas 2012: 70)

A lot of long, investigative stories are often outsourced to freelancers or even citizen journalists. For this purpose platforms such as YouTube and blogs have gained increased amounts of popularity. However, there is often a need to distinguish between online content and online news, since individual bloggers and citizen journalists often propagate their own websites and blogs containing their own personal views as news. The quality of stories by citizen journalists and bloggers have also been questioned as they often lack basic journalistic skills and objectivity, raising questions about the reliability and the authenticity of the story itself (Noor 2012).

Rao (2010) argues about the importance of local news reporting and how journalists, local leaders, and resource-poor citizens, such as low caste villagers, are all empowered through these processes of news-making. She talks about the producers and consumers of news and says that the two categories overlap making news the effect of co-production by various social actors. However, on several occasions, national news networks do not pay attention to rural news leading to inadequate reportage of rural issues. One of the reasons for this is that the towns and villages of the region where the event had occurred do not come under TRP (television rating point) regions. Thus numerically the viewership is much less than the major towns and cities and in some studies it has been argued that certain issues are either not reported or are covered less due to low viewership (Parathasarathi & Srinivas 2012). In such cases, digital media has provided a lot of people, including minority groups, with a platform to voice their own

opinions. However, whether digitisation has contributed to a greater awareness of social and cultural diversity is far from conclusive (Rao 2010).

The potential of new media to provide people with a platform for sociopolitical activism have been felt. In an open source campaign the participants have the freedom to interpret and make the campaign their own, which makes it easier to generate significant mobilisation. Online activism escalated in India with the emergence of blogs around 2004. A blog set up after the Tsunami tragedy to provide first-hand information on the disaster, mobilise relief efforts and to help affected and lost people find their families, created a record by registering one million hits within a week of its creation (Singh & Shahid 2006). According to Parathasarathi & Srinivas (2012), the Indian online activists can be broadly classified into three major groups, social activists who talk about various on-going social issues, political activists who fight for greater regional autonomy or for independence from the Indian state and the middle class activists who fight to defend their own interest. The most prominent among them all have been the middle class activists (Parathasarathi & Srinivas 2012).

In case of political activism, individuals and organisations have started using ICTs and social media on a regular basis. This includes both individuals and organisations using social media for activism, as well as political leaders using social media for propaganda. Such efforts were seen in Kashmir when activists started posting on Facebook groups and Kashmiri separatist leaders posted recruitment videos on YouTube (Hassan 7 August 2014). Indian politicians have also exceedingly started using social media channels like Facebook and Twitter in order to keep their voters informed and engaged. The 2014 general elections in India were termed as India's first social media elections where political parties across the country attempted to influence their voters through social media (Khullar & Haridasani 10 April 2014) Politicians participated in Google + Hangouts, televised interviews organised through Facebook and used Facebook owned mobile application called Whatsapp to connect with the millions of tech savvy urban voters (Patel 31 March 2014).

Post –election, most of the politicians have remained active on social media channels. The most active social media politician however has been the current Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, who is only second behind Barack Obama in the number of fans on his Facebook Page. He has been a great supporter of the concept of digital India and used social media strategically to bypass traditional media outlets and reach his supporters directly, to connect with them on a personal level (Willis 25 September 2014). He was one of the first politicians to have his own website. His website not only details all his campaigns but also gives readers the opportunity to write directly to him and share their ideas. From October 2014, Modi started hosting his own radio programme through which he freely addresses the nation. All these talks are also available online as podcasts for supporters to access. In his campaign to clean the streets and public places in India, he adopted the idea of the ALS ice bucket challenge where he nominated nine famous personalities to take up the challenge of cleaning the streets and post pictures and videos on social media. They in turn had to nominate nine others (The Hindustan Times 1 October 2015). Such initiatives taken directly by the Prime Minister have had a great impact on the digitisation of India and it has also helped people realise the potential of using social media for sociopolitical activism.

The government has also understood the importance of digitisation and not only are they trying to improve the infrastructure and the policy framework but are also playing an important role in the driving of wide scale usage of Internet technologies. E-governance has been a key focus as technology adoption is a key feature to build the infrastructure gap between the urban and rural population. The National e-governance Plan (NeGP), which was approved in 2006 and formulated by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DEITY) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), took several steps to ensure that (India.gov.in 21 May 2015). Another significant step towards inclusive development through the adoption of digitisation was the issuing of unique identification numbers (UID) to the residents through the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). The UIDAI project was initially conceived by the Planning Commission of India as an initiative that would provide identification for each resident across the country and would be used primarily as the basis for efficient delivery of welfare services (UIDAI 2012).

The growth of the digital eco-system has given rise to a lot of entrepreneurial opportunities and new start-up businesses in the digital space are being led by first generation entrepreneurs and not big corporate firms. The National Entrepreneurship Network (NEN) was set up in 2003 with the mission to help support high-growth entrepreneurs and help to create more jobs to drive the economy forward. This is especially directed towards young entrepreneurs and the NEN have formed valuable partnerships with over 470 top-tier academic institutions in India (National Entrepreneurship Network 2012).

3.3 Digital Divide, Gender and ICTs

Digital divide can broadly be defined as the economic inequality and gap in opportunities experienced by those with limited or no access to technology, especially the internet. This definition can be used to divide the world largely into two categories, those who have and those who do not. According to Gurumurthy (2004),

The divisions between winners and losers in the global ICT arena are stark. This subsection offers some statistical analysis to illustrate inequities in access to ICTs. It also shows how the control of the ICT arena by powerful corporations, and the power relations between rich and poor countries, the state and citizen, men and women, determine access to benefits in the ICT arena. It highlights how, in the process of globalisation, the potential of ICTs is captured for furthering the interests of the powerful.

(Gurumurthy 2004:17)

Digital divide can be further categorised in the global, national and regional levels. About 39% of the global population is using the Internet of which 77% of the users are based in developed countries (ITU 2013). Even within Asia, the percentage of people using the Internet in South Korea is much higher than India or Indonesia. Within India a huge disparity exists between the different states. Rural people do not have access to

information that the urban educated people have. The introduction of the Internet in India in 1995 further increased the digital divide between the urban and the rural and the English and the non-English speaking population of the country. According to Rao (2005: 364), 'within a state, there is an urban–rural digital divide; within urban, there is educated–uneducated digital divide; amongst educated there is rich–poor digital divide'.

The divisions between winners and losers in the global ICT arena are stark. The control of the ICT arena by powerful corporations, and the power relations between rich and poor countries, the state and citizen, men and women, determine access to benefits in the ICT arena. It highlights how in the process of globalisation, the potential of ICTs is captured for furthering the interests of the powerful. However, for the purpose of this research we shall explore the concept of digital divide from a gender point of view.

In a country like India the problem of digital divide is not limited to accessing of technology alone. There are various other factors that need to be taken into consideration. These differences can be based on geography, race, gender, economic status and other factors that limit people from developing the skills and knowledge required to use ICTs. This also includes the limitations of accessibility in social issues, cultural issues, disability issues, economic issues and learning issues (Rao 2005).

There is also a dramatic gap in the literacy rate in different parts of India, where women in the urban areas are more likely to have access to education than in the rural parts. In states like Rajasthan the female literacy rate is as low as 53.3% according to the 2011 census (Kaur 13 June 2013). The low literacy rate among women does not only affect the overall growth of the country but has far reaching effects on other areas of development. This lack of awareness leads to an overall lack of knowledge about one's own rights leading to degradation in the overall lifestyle. When a girl or a woman is not educated, it is not only she who suffers but the entire family has to bear the consequences of her illiteracy (Navsarjan Trust & International Dalit Solidarity Network 2013). It has been found that illiterate women face more hardships in life than literate ones (Boehmeer & Williamson 1996). They have high levels of fertility as well as mortality; they suffer from malnutrition and all other related health problems. It has

been also found that infant mortality is inversely related to mother's educational level (Boehmeer & Williamson 1996). In such a case it is not only women who go through the same condition but their children also suffer the consequences.

However, to increase the female literacy rate there are various issues deep rooted in the concepts of patriarchy and overall representation and status of women in the Indian society that need to be addressed. Since girls are often not considered as an earning part of the family, the priority to educate a girl child is not as much as the priority given to the education of a male child. Women who do not know the importance of education in her life, does not emphasise the same for her children. This hampers the family as well as the nation's progress as a whole (Kaur 13 June 2013).

Various social and cultural issues also need to be taken into consideration when addressing the problem of gender divide in technology. Frequently, ICT facilities like cyber cafes or rural information centres are located in places where women might not be comfortable frequenting. Since most communication facilities in the rural areas are shared public accesses, women often face the problem of time. Women in most rural areas are subjected to heavy domestic duties as well as other duties, such as helping in farming and rearing cattle. They are further responsible for taking care of the elders and the children in the family. It is often the case that after completing their multiple duties, when women have time to go to cybercafés for training, the centres are closed. It can also be the case that the centres are open late in evening when it is not safe for women to travel alone in dark. Some families do not allow women to step out of the house after a certain time in the day further limiting their mobility (Hafkin 2002). In most cases such training centres do not have the services of female staff and trainers, which make it a very uncomfortable choice for a lot of women who are not used to closely interact with men. For many women, such close interaction with other men apart from family members, might not be allowed by the family. All such reasons should be taken into consideration while setting up gender-neutral infrastructure in the rural areas (Hafkin 2002). Another major problem is that most of the content on the web is in English, while women in rural areas are unlikely to have knowledge of the language.

The other persistent gender problem is the general attitude towards women studying ICTs. It is a common perception that the subjects related to science and technology are meant to be studied by men and till date remain highly male dominated. Some parents and teachers even think that girls lack the mental ability to think and analyse scientifically and are discouraged to take up such fields of education. Often they are encouraged to take any job or get married rather than seek higher education (Hafkin 2002). In 1999, Dr Sougata Mitra, the chief scientist at the National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT) in India, conducted an experiment called the Hole-in-the-Wall to research more into the Minimally Invasive Education for mass computer literacy. The experiment was carried out in the Kalkaji slum in the outskirts of New Delhi and subsequently the process was repeated in two other slums in India (Hole-in-the-wall Education Ltd 2001). PCs connected to the Internet were provided on the side of the roads and left without any instructions or announcements. It was observed through this experiment that the children acquired the basic computer skills mostly through incidental learning and minimal human guidance. The hypothesis of the experiment was based on theories such as piagetian, situated cognition and constructivism (Mitra 2000).

The Kalkaji slum is home to large number to children between in the age of 0 and 18, most of whom do not go to any schools. Some do go to Government schools but they are generally of very poor quality lacking in proper resources, motivated students and teachers, with a poor curriculum and a general lack of interest. None of the children had any knowledge of English. The kiosk was constructed such that a monitor and touch pad was placed in a hole in the wall and visible through a glass plate. The experiment started on January 26, 1999 and a video camera was placed on a nearby tree to record the event. It was noted that the most frequent visitors to the kiosk were boys between 6 and 12. Very few older girls visited the Kiosk. In Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh, the second location for the experiment, it was noted that in the four days when the kiosk was under detailed observation, there were no female users there. It was also noted that aggressive boys would push away girls preventing them from using the kiosk (Mitra 2000). Therefore, as Gurumurthy (2004: 5) states that ‘women’s empowerment in the information society requires a constant examination of how gender relations as a dynamic cultural process are being negotiated and contested, in relation to the technology environment’.

Even though relatively few applications of the technology are planned to achieve gender goals in India, ICTs may have had indirect, but profound effects on gender roles, gender equity, and the empowerment of women. The M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation's Village Knowledge Centre in Pondicherry have allowed women, who previously would not have ventured out of their village unaccompanied by their husbands or in-laws, to acquire some status and standing in their village by learning and providing information to the villagers. Men who are farmers, landless labourers, and traders come to them for information and the women provide the answers. They have also set up self-help groups and microenterprises and taken part in discussions attended by international delegates (M.S. & Swaminathan Research Foundation 2003).

In Chennai, India, the 'Inter-city Marketing Network of Women Entrepreneurs' has set up a communication network amongst woman's community based organisations (CBOs) to market their produce. Women have been provided with mobile phones and have been trained to use them so that they can not only reach out to their neighbours but also markets in different cities. The women coming from poor backgrounds constrained by time, knowledge and mobility are now able to access and live up to market demand by trading through their peer CBOs, and evolve cost-effective mechanisms to increase business turnover by making the most of business networking (Joseph 1 February 2005).

In Gujarat, India, women dairy producers use the Dairy Information System Kiosk (DISK), a database that gives them the details of all milk cattle, provides information on veterinary services and other useful information about the dairy sector. This information helps woman farmers to maximise their productivity and their profits. Other ICT devices like PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) and financial software applications in micro-credit activity are also being explored by development agencies and NGOs, to enhance women's economic opportunities (Rama Rao 2000).

In many schools in India, computers are being used as a tool to support the learning process. It has been noted the classrooms are not free from gender bias and thus gender sensitive planning of ICT interventions should be taken into consideration to ensure equal access and effective use of ICTs by both genders. In India, NGOs like the Azim Premji Foundation are working with the government to strengthen the public education system. CD ROMs with creative content based on primary school curriculum are produced by this organisation. These CDs are produced keeping in mind various gender sensitive issues. They use different local dialects and they are also designed to appeal to rural students (Azim Premji Foundation 2011).

Gender discrimination is very apparent in India, especially in the rural areas. To address this issue, Mobile Vaani started a campaign in association with Oxfam India called 'Close the Gap' to take into account the perception of people about gender discrimination and how it can be tackled in the society. They built an intelligent IVR (interactive voice response) system that allowed people to call into a number and leave a message about their community, or listen to messages left by others. The campaign started on the March 4, 2013, in which, every week callers were given new topics for weekly discussions. The campaign lasted for five weeks and collectively it reached about 500,000 families across rural and urban India. The five topics discussed were 'general perceptions about gender', 'political participation of women', 'violence against women', 'women at work' and 'women and health'. Of all the messages that were left, 30% of the messages were on violence against women, 24% were about women and their work, 15% about political participation of women, 10% spoke about health issues and the remaining 21% left suggestions on how to reduce the gender gap (Gram Vani 2013). According the report produced by the campaign,

For closing the gap, the rural and urban India together attested the need for change in the social norms by educating people so that they change their attitudes towards women and the need for having stronger laws to protect women against the evils of patriarchy and criminal offences carried out against women. While the responses from rural areas stressed more on the change required in the domain of patriarchal attitudes towards women and their control over women's life, the responses from urban areas demanded pro-women

policies for increased inclusion of women in political, judicial and other social institutional aspects of public life.

(Gram Vani 2013: 3)

3.4 Censorship

Issues that are considered socially and culturally sensitive in India can be divided into three main categories: firstly ones related to territorial, religious or ethnic divisions, secondly ones based on gender, caste and sexual orientation and finally ones related to natural resources (Parathasarathi & Srinivas 2012). In 2005 it was announced by the government that a separate code, alongside independent regulators, would be set up to monitor news content but it was never actually implemented. In 2012, when people from North-East India started getting targeted in acts of violence in some South Indian states, the government banned about 310 websites to remove malicious content. Twitter was asked to remove 16 pages, which included some fake profiles of the Prime Minister. Bulk MMS or text messages were also banned to prevent rumours. But it was later discovered that out of all the websites banned by the government only about one-fifth of them contained any reference to the north-east (Sinha 22 August 2012). Most of the inflammatory content on the blocked web pages was posted by Pakistan's Internet community and that had little connection to what had been going on in India at that time. Most of the blocked web pages talked about the perceived persecution of the Muslim community in Myanmar (Sinha 22 August 2012).

With the rapid expansion of the television industry, content is rapidly increasing as well. The increased competition among cable operators has been beneficial for the viewers in many ways. However, many cable operators also blocked channels that were airing content against their owners. For example, during the Telangana movement (a people's movement for the separation from the existing state of Andhra Pradesh in South India and creating the new state of Telengana), cable operators from Telangana threatened to block all channels from Andhra Pradesh that aired programs against their cause (Parathasarathi & Srinivas 2012). In an interview, Kanwar Sandhu, the head of the Day and Night News channel in Punjab, confirmed that whenever their channel telecasted

something detrimental to the ruling political party it faced pressure such as blocking of its relays, blackouts, faulty transmission, or muting of volume (Mehta 25 August 2012).

The three primary dynamics that shaped the Internet regulation in India are the insurgency and activist movements in Kashmir, North-East and Central India, the use of mobile phones and satellite communication by terrorists during the Mumbai attacks in 2008 and cyber-espionage and data theft concerning government websites (Parthasarathi & Srinivas 2012). After the 2008 Mumbai Blasts the government put in place strict regulations related to media content. Investigation of the 2008 terror attacks, also known as the 26/11 attacks, showed trails of cyber terrorism (Halder 2011). The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (ICERT) was given the power to intercept emails, block websites and web content, and give directions for compliance to service providers, intermediaries and data centres. During the 2010 Allahabad High Court verdict relating to the religious conflict in Ayodhya (ancient Indian city that has been the site of several cases of communal violence), the government banned all mass texts and MMSs in order to prevent communal violence (Department of Electronics and Information Technology 2012). In an interview, Pranesh Prakash of the Center for Internet and Society, Bangalore, explained,

The State has been given unbridled power to block access to websites as long as such blocking is deemed to be in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, and other such matters. Thus, if a web portal or blog carries or expresses views critical of the Indo-US nuclear deal, the government can block access to the website and thus muzzle criticism of its policies.

(Prakash 29 July 2009)

Another example of the government's attempt to regulate the use of ICTs was witnessed in 2004 after a MMS scandal that involved a short video made by a male student at a reputable private school in New Delhi, which showed him engaging in sexual acts with a fellow female student. Another college student who received the film made it into a CD and circulated it widely as pornography. He also set it up for an auction on Ebay

India, then known as Bazeed.com. In a judgement delivered in 2008, the Delhi High Court said that the intermediaries like Bazeed.com share responsibility for the crime as it was hosted on their website, even though it had not been uploaded by them (Verma 20 October 2013). Since then legal liabilities have become increasingly stringent. The court also declared that anybody in possession of such clips on their phones or personal computers can face up to six months imprisonment and a fine of up to ten thousand rupees (approximately 100 GBP). However, many have voiced their concern over the law's inability to understand the cultural form where the producers of such material are set free and the consumers are found guilty. According to Shah (2007), 'this is a definite example of disavowal on the part of the state, where instead of policing technology, it polices the consumption of technological forms' (Shah 2007: 41).

Internet censorship is an issue that has been widely debated all over the world. In a report published by World Public Opinion called 'World Public Opinion and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' in 2008 showed that people across the globe supported the principal that media should be free of government control and government should not limit Internet access (Misra 3 December 2014). The report based on a poll of twenty nations stated that, 'with just a few exceptions majorities say that the government should not have the right to limit access to the Internet' (Misra 3 December 2014). In the year 2000, the Information Technology Act was put in place by the government in India, which was followed by amendment laws such as Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules in 2008 and Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking of Access of Information by Public) Rules in 2009. The IT law helped in providing 'a legal framework for regulating Internet use and commerce, including digital signatures, security, and hacking' (Misra 3 December 2014). The amendments reinforced the powers of the government giving it the authority to block sites and online content. An additional liability on online content was subjected in form of the Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, which made sending offensive messages through communication service a punishable offence. In April 2011, the 'IT Rules 2011', required Internet companies to remove any content that can be considered objectionable, particularly if its nature 'infringes copyright' or is 'defamatory', 'hateful' or 'harmful to minors' by the authorities, within thirty-six hours of being notified (Misra 3 December 2014).

However, in March 2015, the Supreme Court in India declared the Section 66A of the IT act to be unconstitutional and struck it down. The court said that section was vaguely worded and hence could be misused by people in authority especially the police. The court also watered down Section 79, which made it difficult for the police to question and harass innocent people for their comments on social networking sites (Mahapatra & Choudhary 24 March 2015). However, the court still upheld the validity of the Section 69B and the 2011 guidelines that allowed the government to block websites if the content had chances of creating communal disturbance, social disorder or affect India's relationship with other countries (Mahapatra & Choudhary 24 March 2015).

Corporate and political bodies have been monitoring content on the Internet more closely than before and they have been quick to take legal action against individual blogs and or even status updates on social networking sites. Between January to June 2011, The Google Transparency report showed that they received about 236 requests from the Government of India for removal of content from Orkut and about 19 from YouTube, even though many of such content might not come under the news related category (Timmons 5 December 2011). Parathasarathi & Srinivas (2012) argues,

It is thus amply clear that while media infrastructure is under-regulated in India, media content is increasingly regulated. What is more concerning is that content regulation is explicitly conducted by the executive and implicitly by the judiciary, thereby bypassing any debate and endorsement by the legislature—i.e. by directly elected representatives.

(Parathasarathi & Srinivas 2012:129)

The concept of net neutrality has also been an issue that has been extensively debated in India. In March 2015 the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) issued a consultation paper that provided several recommendations in order to deal with the growth of Internet services and apps in India. The main concern was that the paper advocated licensing of Internet companies along with destroying the idea of net neutrality that exists in India (Soni 25 May 2015). This led to massive debates around the issue and started a movement in India with the hashtag #SaveTheInternet. Groups of

volunteers called netneutrality.in and savetheinternet.in through their website allowed people to respond to TRAI in order to protect Internet freedom in India. Net neutrality is the idea, by which Internet service providers give their customers the access to all lawful websites and Internet services without giving priority to any other service over another. After much debate, the government stated that they were committed to the idea of net neutrality and would provide non-discriminatory access to the Internet all over the country (The Times of India 24 July 2015). In February 2016, TRAI also ruled in favour of net neutrality stating that discriminatory tariffs cannot be charged by operators based on content (Soni 8 February 2016). On talking about this Avila, programme manager for the Web We Want campaign at the World Wide Web Foundation states,

The message is clear: We can't create a two-tier Internet – one for the haves, and one for the have-nots. We must connect everyone to the full potential of the open web. We call on companies and the government of India to work with citizens and civil society to explore new approaches to connect everyone as active users, whether through free data allowances, public access schemes or other innovative approaches.

(Soni 8 February 2016)

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have traced out a brief history of the IWM, taking into consideration some movements of specific importance. To fully understand the nature of the women's movement in Indian and the sociopolitical environment of the time, I have discussed both movements that were specifically organised by women's institutions or concerned with issues related to women and some other movements that led to mass mobilisation and resulted in significant sociopolitical changes. Some of the other movements discussed in this chapter saw large numbers of women participants and shaped the contemporary sociopolitical scenario, which in turn had great effects on the IWM. Such movements were also taken into consideration to demonstrate that the experiences of men and women within the social movement environment can be very different and

gender dynamics must be taken into consideration to develop a more complete understanding of the process.

The Naxalbari movement that originated in Bengal proved to be one that shaped the future of communist politics and ideologies in the country. Though it was not a feminist movement, after independence it was the first movement that saw women leaving the confines of the household and venture free in the urban/rural landscape. The movement was criticised for its lack of women leadership and gendering of the political space (Roy 2007). However, it was important to consider this movement for its significance in terms of propagating Marxist ideologies in India, which played crucial part in future feminist movements. The early seventies was a turbulent period in Indian history and it saw a series of protests. However, it was perhaps this agitation and turmoil that led to the formation of women's unions and women started joining more campaigns like the anti-price rise movements.

During the 1970s India saw a revival in feminist activities and large numbers of autonomous feminist groups were formed. In this new era in the IWM, issues like custodial rape and dowry murders were taken up for the first time. Different autonomous organisations were formed to protest and demand changes in the law. This was the first time that violence against women was given such importance. After months of campaigning, however, the state did take into consideration the recommendations from feminist groups and implemented changes in law and feminist groups soon realised that there was a huge difference between the enactment of law and the implementation of law.

The campaigns tackling violence against women made many feminists take a broader look at the condition of women and gender struggles in India. Many organisations changed their strategies and tried developing a community of sisterhood, a place of creativity and self-expression, where women could come not only for advice and help but also to express themselves (Kumar 1993). The 1980s saw feminist organisations question the position of women within the family. In this context the questions of personal law became important, especially in a country where religion and communities

shape personal laws. It was difficult for feminists to accept that the state agreed to introduce a new bill that would curb the rights of Muslim women just to satisfy a certain section of Muslim voters who felt unhappy in the backdrop of communal violence in the country (Singer 2012). It made them realise that women's rights can be shaped by the beliefs of a certain community making them question the idea of secularism and representation of women. In 1997, the Supreme Court issued guidelines to fight against sexual harassment in the workplace. However, the woman whose case instigated this law till date awaits justice for the crime against her giving rise to questions about the status of women and nature of patriarchy (Firstpost India 21 November 2013).

The advent of ICTs and social media started a new phase in the IWM. Here I have especially talked about the Pink Underwear Campaign, which was one of the first national campaigns to have used social media for large-scale organisation and the raising of awareness (Mishra 19 February 2009). In this chapter, I further talk about the media environment in India discussing important topics like the emergence of ICTs, digital divide and censorship. It is extremely important to be aware of the digital landscape of the country in order to fully understand and analyse the use of ICTs for gender activism in India. This chapter gives an introduction to the IWM and builds a foundation that helps in developing an understanding of the social, political, economic, media and technological environment of the country, within which the contentious activities takes place (Olabs 2015). This knowledge is essential for analysing the topic considered for the research.

In the next chapter: 'Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework', I have analysed the protests after the Nirbhaya case through the lens of the sociopolitical components as stated in the cyberconflict framework to understand the emergence and development of the movement. I further discuss government reactions and changes in law that followed the Nirbhaya case to understand the outcome of the movement.

Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework

The Nirbhaya case took place on the December 16, 2012 in New Delhi, India. Immediately after the incident was reported in the media, huge protests broke out all over the country. Thousands swarmed the streets of Delhi to protest the death of the innocent victim, women's safety, women's rights and anti-rape laws. For the purpose of this research, I have taken into consideration the protests post the Nirbhaya case in order to understand the role of social media and ICTs in gender activism in India. In this chapter, I have analysed the protests after the Nirbhaya case through the lens of the sociopolitical components as stated in the cyberconflict framework (see Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations'). In the cyberconflict framework, Karatzogianni (2006) specifically uses resource mobilisation theories (RMT) and new social movement (NSM) theories in order to understand the emergence, development and outcome of social movements by addressing the effects of ICTs and social media on mobilisation structures, political opportunity structure and framing process.

This chapter has been divided into two main sections. In the first section, following the cyberconflict framework, I discuss the Nirbhaya case in the light of social movement theory focusing on three main aspects: mobilisation structures, political opportunity structures and framing processes as witnessed in the ensuing protests in order to understand the emergence and development of the movement. This will not only help to fully understand the nature of the movement but also help to further analyse the importance of ICTs and social media in gender activism in India. Finally, in order to understand the outcome of the movement, in the second section of this chapter, I talk about the government reactions and changes in law that followed the Nirbhaya case.

4.1 The Nirbhaya Protests: Mobilisation Structure and Collective Action

Mobilisation is an essential feature of both resource mobilisation and new social movement theories (see Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual

Considerations'). Mobilisation structure refers to the processes by which a system is created to facilitate the contentious activities in a political situation (Olabs 2015). According to McAdam et al. (1996), mobilisation structures help in providing structure to a movement that further helps individuals and groups to participate in collective action. Morris & Muller (1992), further states that the main task of mobilisation process is to generate solidarity and commitment in the name of the movement that further helps in generating collective action. Thus collective action can be defined as 'the result of purposes, resources, and limits, as a purposive orientation constructed by means of social relationships within a system of opportunities and constraints' (Melucci 1995: 43). Evan and Boyte (1986) emphasises the importance of generating solidarity in order to bring people together to generate mobilisation and collective identity. Zald & McCarthy (1979) agree with the view and states that ties of friendship, kinship and shared ideologies are crucial to bring together participants when collection action is necessary.

On talking about the formation of collective identity Melucci (1995: 43) states that, 'by asking the question of how individuals and groups make sense of their actions and how we can understand this process, we are obliged to shift from a monolithic and metaphysical idea of collective actors toward the processes through which a collective becomes a collective'. Collective identity plays a major role in answering different questions related to the emergence, trajectories and impacts of the social movements. Melucci (1995) further argues about the importance of emotional and cultural factors in the formation of collective identities and state that the emotional involvement of activists with social movements is essential to generate active relations leading to collective identity and collective action. Flesher Fominaya (2007) and Hunt & Benford (2004) also agree with this view, stating that emotions and affective ties play an important role in generating motivation and collective identity. Hence groups that are motivated by ideological commitment, sharing strong interpersonal networks and a distinct identity tend to be more effective and can be readily mobilised. In order to fully understand the use and impact of ICTs within a movement, the cyberconflict framework divides the mobilisation structure into sub categories such as participation, recruitment, leadership, tactics and goals (Karatzogianni 2006, 2015).

One of the first large scale protest marches was organised in New Delhi on December 22, 2012. People started gathering in front of the India Gate¹ at about eight in the morning. As the day passed they started marching towards Raisina Hill². Nilanjana Roy was present in the protests in the Raisina Hills and she documented her experience on her blog. She wrote that it was predominantly a young crowd mainly consisting of students, young men and woman in their twenties. There were little groups of people who represented political organisations but it was mostly people who were drawn together by their shared anger. Thousands of people gathered on the hills, not only from Delhi but from the nearby areas of Faridabad and Ghaziabad as well. Roy wrote, ‘Almost all of them heard about the protest on Facebook and Twitter, or from friends—not through the mainstream media’ (Roy 22 December 2012).

One of the first protest marches was organised by the student union of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)³ and they were also one of the first to march up to Raisina Hill on the first day of the protest (Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). Though a large section of the crowd consisted of young students, both male and female, the protest marches also saw the participation of large numbers of people from all sections of society, making the protest marches fairly ‘cross-class and cross-cultural’ (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Karatzogianni (2006) argues that, when looking at new social movements, an extensive participation of the educated middle class can be witnessed. Pichardo (1997), agrees with this view and states that participants in new social movements tend to be largely from the urban, educated, middle class intelligentsia. Karatzogianni (2006) further states that the middle class ‘participation revolution’ was rooted in deep post-materialist values, emphasising direct participation and a moral concern toward the plight of others. However, even though a large number of participants belonged to the urban, educated, affluent middle and upper class, alongside them walked people who came from Bustees (slums). There were several women’s organisations that brought along their members

¹ A monument located in the centre of Delhi that commemorates the 70,000 Indian soldiers who lost their lives fighting for the British Army during the World War I

² The area in New Delhi which houses some of the most important government buildings including President’s house, secretariat buildings and House of Parliament.

³ JNU is one of the most prestigious universities in India. It is a public central university situated in New Delhi

and supporters to participate in the marches. One of the participants, when talking about her experience of the protests said, ‘many organisations, especially the leftist organisations, have a long history of working with the people in the slums and so on. So they would bring their supporters. So what you saw on the streets was a very interesting thing’ (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Some other representatives of organisations whom I interviewed to also confirmed that they took a lot of their supporters and members to participate in the protests. One of the participants who is the communications officer of an NGO that works towards empowering girls and women to resist and end sex trafficking, confirmed that their organisations took one hundred survivors to protest to show solidarity (Tarrant, 23 April 2014, interview with author, Skype). Another participant who is the secretary of a non-profit organisation working towards empowering women through technology, said that she took a number of young girls who are a part of their tech-centre in Delhi. All of the girls belonged to slums in Delhi. She said that her organisation works towards building feminist leadership and they took their girls to personally introduce them to the world of activism and give them the experience of being united and giving voice towards a cause that everyone was fighting against. She said, ‘it was a good opportunity for us to show them what activism is, how do you take charge and how do women come together to fight for justice’ (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

What was spectacular about the Nirbhaya case was how people from different sections of society, including women’s organisations, students organisations, NGOs, labour unions, working men and women and even housewives came together organically to protest (Rao 19 March 2013). A participant who is a gender activist, film maker and co-founder of an organisation that works in the area of gender, sexuality and women’s rights, said that pre-Nirbhaya, whenever there was a protest about gender violence, it would be the same group of fifty to hundred people who would keep coming to all the protests and the case is same for almost all the cities in India. However, for the Nibhaya protests a large of people came and joined the protest marches who, under normal circumstances, would never come and participate in these protests (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

ICTs and social media have a great impact on mobilisation structures and contemporary social movements greatly benefit from the innovative uses of ICTs and social media during the mobilisation of protests and participants (Olabs 2015). The rhizomatic, decentralised and horizontal models of communication which are facilitated by the use of ICTs and social media provide multiple alternative entry points, making it easier for movement actors to mobilise participants (Deleuze & Guattari 1988; Castells 2011b). Thus as Karatzogianni (2006) argues, 'shift to a decentralised network of communication makes senders receivers, producers consumers, and rulers ruled, upsetting the logic of the first media age' (Karatzogianni 2006:97). However, ICTs have not only enhanced the capabilities for generating large scale mobilisation, they have also aided activists and civil society actors to participate in advocacy and create solidarity (Shirky 2010; Eltantawy & Wiest 2011).

The affordability, speed and mobility offered by ICTs, mobile phones and other online media platforms have been considered as important resources helping in generating mobilisation, solidarity and collective action and also aiding in increased participation by facilitating member recruitment in contemporary social movements (Garrett 2006; Bonchek 1997). Thus, the reduced cost and convenience of participation owing to new communication media has produced several impacts and implications. The Internet and ICTs have helped to form solidarity in cyberspace through the community that had emerged in the virtual space (Olabs 2015).

Social media and mobile phones had a big role to play in the way people from different sections of society united organically for a single cause in the Nirbhaya protests. It not only helped in generating mobilisation and organisation of the protests, but also helped keep the conversation active and relevant. It provided people with an alternative platform on which they could talk freely and voice their opinions. Apart from engaging with an existing audience base, social media gave the opportunity to various organisations to attract and involve new people. A participant agreed with this view and said that social media and mobile phones had a huge role to play in the way hundreds of new people came out and joined the cause (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). Almost immediately after the case, several Facebook groups emerged

dedicated to the cause and urging people to join the movement. A participant in her interview spoke about the use of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter and mobile phone applications like Whatsapp to spread the message about protests activities including where to meet and what time. So organisations would use their online platform to get people together. However, they would still have little groups present in certain cities so that when they do decide to mobilise, that group can organise the mobilisation process locally. This way on the same day they can organise and participate in protests in different parts of the county (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype).

Even though social movements must maintain a relationship with political parties in order to implement policy and greater change, which are important implications for the success or failure of a social movement, very few social movements in India have developed synergistic relationships with political parties (Ray & Katzenstein 2005). On many occasions, this has been because social movements have been overtaken by political parties in order to fulfil their own interests, in the process diluting the actual cause (Kumar 1993) (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Socio-Political and Media Environment'). The protest marches after the Nirbhaya case also saw the participation of almost all the leading political parties in India, especially their student wings. After the protest garnered popularity, images from the protest showed that, amidst placards and posters, some political flags were quite visible. Some of these posters also had the names of the respective political organisations on them.

One of the participants interviewed is a senior editor for an online platform that is engaged in the attempt to bring attention towards pressing issues through stories and contributions by the Indian youth. Apart from that he is also associated with two political organisations: CPI (ML) liberation (Communist Party of India Marxist-Leninist) and All India Students' Association (ISA). In his interview he said that he went to these protests representing these political organisations (Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). He confirmed that all major political parties

were present during the protests including AAP (Aam Admi Party)⁴ and NSUI (National Students Union of India)⁵. Members from right wing political parties were also present, somewhat ironically since they have been severely criticised on many occasions for their anti-women comments and patriarchal ideas (Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). However, even though the protests saw the extensive participation of political parties and they did try to promote their cause, it was mostly not taken over by them.

However, one of the most spectacular things noticed in the Nirbhaya case was the emergence of the participation of the individual. Meikle (2002) states that access to ICTs has created new kinds of communities but this resurgence of community flows through a new kind of individual empowerment. The online digital space has allowed individuals to become activists without having to root themselves in any organisations or NGOs. Meikle (2002) further argues that, ‘thanks to technology which was decentralised, egalitarian and non-hierarchical; a technology which enabled us to be judged by our contributions - our words – rather than by... age, gender or ethnicity. It’s in the emphasis on our works that we see the importance of the conversational dimension’ (Meikle 2002: 33).

When the Nirbhaya case was first reported, a vast section of the conversation on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter was being generated by individual men and women who had no aspirations of being associated with any non-profit organisations or political parties. These individuals either understood feminism at its core or were extremely passionate about gender related issues or were people who were just deeply affected by the case. In this context a participant spoke about her own experiences on Twitter. On Twitter she follows a number of women who are in sex work. All of them have their own Twitter accounts on which they talk about their daily lives and issues that concern them. This helps in reconstructing the typical image of a sex worker who is always a victim, ‘an unthinkable human being who is always less than us’ (Dutta, 20

⁴ The Aam Admi Party was formally launched on November 26, 2012 after the ‘India Against Corruption’ movement in 2011-2012. The name Aam Admi mean ‘common man’ and the main ideology of the party is to have equality and justice for all and eradicate corruption from the system.

⁵ The student wing of the Indian National Congress party which was the ruling party at the time of the protests

February 2015, interview with author, Skype). This is not only confined to sex workers but the online space has opened up a wide range of conversations about gender and sexual violence that previously would not be publicly discussed. According to a participant, previously the only people who would discuss such issues would be activists in court, people associated with the women's rights movement, people affiliated to certain non-profit organisations or academics and researchers working on the issue (Participant 8, 22 October, 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). However, the Internet has opened up the conversation to all people leading to not only to consciousness raising but also building solidarity and commitment.

The participation of the individual has resulted in a big shift in terms of activism. It has resulted in a shift in the tone of conversation and also a shift in the style of content. For example during the Nirbhaya case, on many occasions, the defining voice online was not any organisation or NGO but some previously unknown individual sharing his or her experiences and views related to the case. An example of this is nineteen-year-old Shambhavi Saxena who was at the protests at Jantar Mantar⁶ on December 25, 2012, which was broken up by the police. Saxena along with other agitators were taken into police custody (Anwer & Shrinivasan 30 December 2012). On her way to the police station and during her detainment/detention, she shared what was happening with the world through her tweets, 'Illegally being held here at Parliament St Police Station Delhi w/ 15 other women. Terrified, pls RT' (Barn 10 March 2013). There was no denying that her voice was heard and more than one thousand and seven hundred people retweeted her SOS message. According to Favstar, a social media analytics site, her tweets reached over two hundred thousand people all over the world (Barn 10 March 2013). This resulted in the galvanising of the civil society where activists and lawyers arrived at the police station where she was detained to provide her and the others arrested with help and advice. Celebrities and the individuals from across the world also joined in to condemn the police on different social media sites. New Delhi Television (NDTV), a very popular all-news cable channel, even ran an hour-long special program titled, "Young India Rising" about Saxena's arrest (Rao 13 March 2013).

The participation and involvement of the individual activist has resulted in a wide range of ideas, thoughts and opinions in the activist space. According to a participant, in order

⁶ An 18th century astronomical building that is a site of various protests in New Delhi

to engage with and involve these individuals, 'you have to relearn activism in that sense' (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). Kumar, who regularly attends protest marches in Delhi, in talking about the Nirbhaya protests in particular, said that he has never witnessed anything like it before. There is large section of the population who claim that they were not interested in politics and as such were apolitical. Previously they would never be a part of any of the protest marches. However, the same group of people who would never go out and protest came out on the streets after the Nirbhaya case demanding change (Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

A large section of the participants interviewed for this research said that they participated in the protest activities as individuals. But, interestingly, some people, even though they went with a group of friends or belonged to some organisations, said that they went to participate in the protest as an individual and not as a part of any group or organisation. They were motivated by their own personal experiences and ideologies, which, in some cases, were deeply personal and not shared by other members of the group. A participant, in her interview, spoke about her experience of sexual violence and said that she was never able to speak about it previously. Even though she was a part of an organisation, she went to the protest for herself because she wanted change. She wanted a social and legal system where people could freely discuss sexual violence without being blamed or belittled (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). In some instances, even women police officers who were in charge of keeping the protesters in control would join the protests briefly. They represented the authority, the system against which people were protesting. However, even they as individuals felt a connection towards the cause (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Networks of kinship and friendship have been central to the understanding of movement recruitment as well as to the understanding of the formation of emergent local movement groups (McCarthy 1996) (see Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations'). Garrett (2006) also emphasises the importance of the informal structures of everyday life that can serve as solidarity and a communication-facilitating-structure in order to generate mobilisation. Fireman & Gamson (1979) agree

with this view and state that solidarity is deeply rooted in configurations of relationships that connect one member of the group to another. Ties of friendship and kinship helps in the development of a sense of common identity, shared fate and commitment, which forms the basis for solidarity within a group (Fireman & Gamson 1979). In the context of women participating in social movements, Kuumba (2001) argues that the position of women within the household and within the community allows them to establish valuable connections of kinship which are essential to the success of a movement.

A huge section of the mobilisation structure in the Nirbhaya protest was formed through these networks of kinship and friendship. Large groups of friends, family members, peers and colleagues formed the core structures of the protests marches. One person would get information about the protest activities and they in turn would pass on the message to their personal network of friends and family. ICTs greatly helped in this, as the ability to send group messages on social media sites like Facebook or mobile phone applications like Whatsapp helped in spreading the message with speed and convenience. A large section of the people interviewed received messages about the protest activities online or through phone messages. The messages were from their personal group of friends and relatives or through the groups they followed on Facebook and Twitter. While one participant (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi) said that she was informed about the protests by her friends and colleagues through texts and Facebook messages, another participant (Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi) said that he was present on the ground every day and informed his network of peers and colleagues about what was happening using various social media sites and mobile phone applications. Conversely, another participant was not present in India during the protests but she participated in the protest activities online by engaging in discussions, spreading the message to her personal and professional networks and signing online petitions. She got a lot of information about the protests from professional groups and NGOs she followed on social media and from friends who were present at the protest marches (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype).

Another reason why some protestors preferred going in groups was because of security. Even though people were protesting for women's safety and security, there were some

cases of sexual harassment and molestation that were reported. A participant who was present at the protests said that often she did not feel safe as women could easily be manhandled or molested (Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). A lot of young women complained that they felt vulnerable while they were in the group. This was not only because of the behaviour of some of the protestors and onlookers but also people in authority. In talking about this, a participant spoke about an instance where one of her students who was protesting, was manhandled by the police before she was locked into the Delhi Parliament Street police station. Her hair was pulled by some constables while other women protestors were pushed away by their chests by male constables (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). This behaviour was not only unethical, but also illegal, since male police officers are not allowed to touch women protestors. This behaviour cannot only be called a case of manhandling and molestation but also sexual harassment. However, no action was taken against the police officers at fault. Even though this was not the main characteristic of the movement and cases like this were in the minority, they did happen and considering the circumstances, it was very disappointing for the protestors (Participant 1, 6 March 2014, interview with author, London).

However, there was a disadvantage to the participation of groups of friends, peers and family. Some interviewees felt that in some cases people just came along to the protests because of peer pressure. As a participant said, 'they just wanted to look cool, take photographs, update their status on Facebook and make a statement' (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype Interview). They were not motivated by the cause but simply came because their friends were coming and they did not want to be left out. Images from the protests were continuously circulated on every media and social media platform and some people also wanted to see for themselves what was happening on the ground. However, a participant in this case points out that it is not necessarily a bad thing as more people coming to the protests provides opportunities for recruitment of new members. Some people might have come to protest marches because of peer pressure but that would expose them to the cause creating an opportunity to educate them about the cause or even convert them to active members (Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

The immediate reaction to the protests by the government was brutal. The police resorted to using tear gas and lathi charges (hitting with their batons) to disperse the

crowd. However, the crowd of protestors remained relatively calm. The small self-appointed leaders in the huge leaderless crowd kept reminding people that, 'say whatever you want to say, abuse as much as you want, but no violence.... Don't let them blame us' (Roy 22 December 2012). However, when the crowd grew in number and some tried to break the barricades, the police equipped with bamboo canes, flanked the water cannon as it blasted out on to the thousands of protesters. Almost twenty students were injured in the attack. One young woman protestor complained that her leg was injured by the blow of the police baton. She said, 'today, I have seen democracy dying' (Singh Shah et al. 4 January 2013).

Despite all odds, the shouts of 'we want justice' rose above the large and diverse crowd, displaying a widely felt anger over attacks against women (Roy 22 December 2012). Roy (22 December 2012), in talking about the nature of the crowd, said that it was diverse and the protestors were impressive in their own ways. A large group of young people had come to the streets because they felt strongly about the cause. They lacked coherence and were often confused but their energy to participate for the cause and to make change was unparalleled. That was the power that social media bestowed on them. It gave them the power to come and be a leader of their own cause as their reasons to protest were all different as opposed to an organised mass demonstration.

According to Olabs (2015: 129), 'a common quality of contemporary social movements is their shared characteristic of spontaneity, leaderless and lack of organisational structure of which the horizontal network frame of the Internet has encouraged'. Garrett (2006) further states that ICTs have helped in the adoption of horizontal, decentralised, non-hierarchical organisational forms. Castells (2004) agrees with this view and states that the advent of new ICTs has resulted in horizontal flow of communication, which is almost devoid of hierarchies as opposed to vertical structures which relied on control and mechanical operations. Karatzogianni (2006) talks about the rhizomatic structure of the Internet and the people who use it are rhizomatic in character without the presence of any leaders. She argues,

Without the need for a leader, and without a particular individual who either has a privileged insight or is able to conceptualise the characteristics of the whole, there is an emphasis on participation, antipathy to hierarchy, a preference for consensus processes and/or directly democratic decision-making, an ethos of respect for differences and an assertion of unity in diversity.

(Karatzogianni 2006: 77)

In talking about the leadership structures, a participant said that the women's movement in India was always predominantly leaderless and that was one of the strengths of the movement (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). She has been a part of the women's movement in India since the Mathura case in the 1970s (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Sociopolitical and Media Environment'). She said that in the earlier days of the women's movement activists had a different set of values and the social structures were different. This made people wary of taking up leadership roles, as they could often be disadvantageous and dangerous. However, she said, the new group of feminist activists have a very different set of values and they do not mind taking up positions of leadership in a movement, which was not common before (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

Horizontal, rhizomatic, leaderless structures have been the characteristic of the networked society (Castells 1996, 2007, 2011; Deleuze & Guattari 1988). On one hand, social media has made the process of collective action more horizontal but on the other hand, it has given rise to different leadership structures. Many of the online feminist campaigns operate in short cycles and only run for a short span of time, so someone can be leader of a specific campaign only for a short span of time. Once the campaign is over, their leadership ceases as well. During the Pink Underwear campaign (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Sociopolitical and Media Environment') a girl from Bangalore took up the position of leadership and became the official spokesperson for the campaign. However, 'it was a one-time online movement' and her leadership ended when the movement ended (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

Even though the Nirbhaya movement has been termed as a people's movement and characterised by its horizontal structures and decentralised co-ordination, in some cases there was a certain level of control and co-ordination exercised by certain individuals. Some people came in groups but once they were a part of the protest, they joined others. Certain self-appointed leaders shouted slogans, spoke to people about their demands and also kept their groups calm and in control. A participant said that it was very important for the Nirbhaya movement to be leaderless. She said that self-appointed leadership in some cases resulted in the 'narrowing and highjacking of the demands' and moving away from the core problems' (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

McCarthy & Zald (1977) emphasise the importance of the collection of resources in order for a movement to be successful. Therefore, it must be taken into consideration how resources are collected and how that contributes towards social change, as well as to what extent the movement is dependent on outside support for resources. Garrett (2007) further states that mobilisation is the process by virtue of which groups and individuals collect resources that are required for collective action. McCarthy and Zald (1979) agree with this view and state that the collection of resources is central to the understanding of social movements as resources must be collectively accumulated in an organised manner by organisations for successful engagement in social conflicts. A large number of the social and political groups use ICTs and social media as a tool and employ them as resources to facilitate their activities and generate solidarity and collective action in contemporary social movements (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011).

Social media provided organisations and activists with new and innovative ways to collect resources. A participant said that even though the organisation that she is a part of does their grassroots work in India, they also have presence in other countries including the USA. This is mainly to collect funds and resources for their activism and also to run an internship programme. She said that social media has greatly helped in bringing attention to problems in India and developing innovative ideas to attract more support for their work. ICTs have also given them the opportunity to build valuable collaborations with other organisations working in the same field and improving their

relationship with their other stakeholders (Tarrant, 23 April 2014, interview with author, Skype).

In the context of collection of resources, McCarthy and Zald (1977) argue for an entrepreneurial theory of movement formation and say that movement entrepreneurs are more successful when they explore major interest cleavages and try to redefine long-term grievances in new terms. Garrett (2006) also supports this view and argues that the adoption of horizontal, decentralised, non-hierarchical organisational forms have made 'movement-entrepreneur-led activism' more feasible (Garrett 2006: 211). An increase in opportunities for cohesive aggrieved groups can thus lead to the formation of movements. While interviewing NGOs and organisations in India, it became clear that organisations following an entrepreneurial model were extremely successful in collecting resources. A participant who runs a community based organisation that works with men and boys to end gender discrimination and violence, said that it was very important to run their non-profit organisation like a business, pay suitable salaries and ensure employee satisfaction. That way people are more motivated to do their work and also find new and innovative ways to continue their activism. They also pay considerable attention to collection of grants and setting up valuable collaborations (Muir, 2 April 2014, interview with author, Skype Interview).

Another participant, who is the founder of an online platform called 'Got Stared At' said that at the very outset they decided that they did not want to run their organisation as a non-profit but run it as a civil society organisation. He states, 'the idea was that, let's keep it free, let's keep it democratic, let people run it so that we are bound to sort of do one thing and not do another thing' (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). The founder of another online platform called Youth Ki Awaz' (the voice of the youth) said that they were very particular about their organisation not being run as a non-profit. It's a for-profit organisation, a private limited company. On talking about how the platform runs he says, 'how it sustains, is we launch all these campaigns for different non-profits, and the non-profits actually sponsor these campaigns. So it's a fairly simple business model that we put into place' (Tiwari, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Advancements in ICTs especially hand held computers, mobile phones and their links with the Internet, have changed the way citizen groups mobilise, build coalitions, inform, lobby, communicate and campaign (Hajnal 2002). ICTs, mobile phone and social media have given people the power to connect with activists across the globe, share ideas, express anger and create a much needed space required for spreading awareness (Keller 2012). Consciousness-raising has been termed as the backbone of second wave feminism and these online groups have tried to achieve the purpose, starting from the core and spreading to thousands all across the globe (Martin & Valenti 2012). Video sharing, citizen journalism and micro blogging have created quicker and more immediate information sharing possibilities. A lot of news that are ignored by the mainstream media is also being covered in such platforms. Often the online aggression has created major offline impact when thousands have taken to the streets to protest, galvanising the masses for a common cause. Erin Matson, the former Action Vice President of the National Organisation of Women commented that ‘we can’t move too quickly over the important cultural (and deeply political) feminist work that younger women are leading, largely online. All this work is rapidly building into a platform that has the power to force big policy changes, and that’s exciting’ (Martin & Valenti 2012: 10).

ICTs are also helping to create new and interesting opportunities for people to organise and raise consciousness in creative ways that were not possible before. Porna Jagannathan, a popular Indian actress, was deeply disturbed after the Nirbhaya case and wanted to do something to spread awareness about gender violence. She noticed Yeal Farber, a prominent theatre director from South Africa, specialising in testimonial theatre, speaking about the case on Facebook. She then contacted Farber on Facebook with the idea of a testimonial theatre related to gender violence in India. After a few conversations Farber came to India to develop the play. Almost all participating members of the play were recruited through Facebook (Jaganathan, 7 March 2014, interview with author, London). Due to the lack of funding in India, the play called ‘Nirbhaya’ premiered in the Edinburgh Fringe in 2013. The play finally premiered in India in April 2014. All finances for the tour was raised through a strategy called ‘crowdfunding’, in which funds can be raised online collaboratively (Buncombe 4 March 2014). Such resources have resulted in new ideas and new projects. Women have always been told to keep quiet about assaults. However, projects like ‘

Nirbhaya' have allowed women to come forward, anonymously in a lot of cases, and talk about assaults, sexual abuse and other acts of discrimination that they faced, based on their gender. They now had the sanction and solidarity of a community that would understand and support them.

4.2 Political Opportunity Structure

According to Garrett (2006), political opportunity structures can be defined as attributes of a social system that facilitate or constrain movement activity and thus must be taken into consideration when crafting movement actions. Thus, the structure of political opportunity is used to describe whether or not the national context is open or closed, democratic or dictatorial and help determine whether or not contentious activities will thrive in that environment (Olabs 2015). Several factors, including the current political climate, economic conditions, and cultural factors all contribute towards determining the political opportunity structure. In talking about the relationship between ICTs and opportunity structures Ayres (1999) argues that ICTs, in combination with the global economic processes, can result in dissident activities becoming increasingly transnational which in turn can affect opportunity structures on a national level. Garrett (2006) agrees with this view and states that opportunity structures on the national level are largely influenced by transnational occurrences, trends and changes. On the other hand, it also results in the emergence of new avenues of transnational opportunity structures for collective action (Ayres 1999).

Social movements are dependent, and draw, upon a larger societal context. Societal and cultural norms dictate and define injustice and violation. There were various factors that contributed to building the opportunity structure for the Nirbhaya protests. The current political and economic environment of that time was a major factor. Over the months of April and May 2014 India witnessed one of the most controversial elections of recent times. Over the past two years several cases of corruption against the current government came to light leading to tremendous agitation especially amongst the middle class. Due to the gross corruption of those in public office and deeply unimpressive economic performance, India's annual growth rate sunk from 9.3% in

2010-2011 to under 5% in 2014 leading to huge amounts of public borrowing, substantial growth of the national deficit, inflation and the plummeting of the India rupee by more than 20% (Dalrymple 12 May 2014).

In the year 2010, a series of corruption controversies were unveiled to the Indian public, which involved several prominent political figures. What followed was a series of protests across the country where many other cases of corruption were brought into the public eye. More than ten thousand people assembled on the streets of Delhi to protest against various scams involving the government, including the Indian Common Wealth Games Scam and the 2G scam. The Central Bureau of India (CBI) arrested several top bankers and banking officials in relation to the 2010 housing loan scam. Rudolf Elmer's black money list revealed the names of many Indians and the Income Tax department issued instant investigation into the evading taxpayers. The Wikileaks 'Cash for votes' scandal revealed that heavy bribes were offered to Indian law makers over the vote on the Indo-US nuclear deal (Kumar 22 March 2011).

However the protest against corruption reached its peak in April 2011 when a seventy three year old man called Anna Hazare started his hunger strike in Jantar Mantar (an 18th century astronomical building that is a site of various protests) in New Delhi. In this context it is important to mention this campaign since it not only saw the participation of a large number of women but it also paved the way for the Nirbhaya protests that would follow this movement. Through this campaign, India, for the first time, witnessed the power of social media and ICTs in terms of organisation and raising of consciousness. Anna Hazare was protesting against the Congress (the ruling party at that time) led government's lackadaisical attempts to punish those responsible for large-scale corruption (Senapati 2011). The movement soon gained tremendous momentum and thousands of people including social activists, celebrities, students and members of the urban middle class joined the movement as it spread to various parts of India.

Hazare's anti-corruption movement was one of the biggest mass movements witnessed in India in recent times and one of the main reasons behind the success of the movement was the use of social media and ICTs. An NGO called India Against Corruption became

an integral part of the movement. Respondents from every part of the country commented on the page revealing the real nature of participatory media. Analysis of 15 days (August 16, 2011 to August 30, 2011), selected sample reflected that ‘only Facebook witnessed 5.5 Lakh (0.55 million) followers who just not only participated in the discussion but they have followed the posts daily during Hazare’s fast at Ram Lila Ground in New Delhi’ (Parashar 2012: 2). There were more than 304 million page impressions for news feeds, 1.9 million likes, 0.33 million comments and more than 4.3 million active users. As per booshaka.com (a Facebook analysis tool), ‘IndiACor page got 3.3 million booshaka points. This made it a leader among almost all the Facebook pages in the world for August 2011. IndiACor was ahead of Facebook pages for Manchester United, WWE, Joyce Meyer ministries, Cristiano Ronaldo and Barack Obama’(Amar 13 August 2011).

The data also revealed that about 53% of the likes were from users under the age of 25 confirming that the movement was mainly youth driven (Amar 13 August 2011). Several celebrities and news channels continuously updated Twitter resulting in several trends related to the movement. A large number of live videos in support of the movement were also uploaded on YouTube by individuals and news channels. The vital role of technology behind the movement cannot be ignored. Mumbai’s Netcore Company provided its services to team Anna which enabled them to send messages, both online and by phone, to galvanise support for the movement. The company used IBM technology to send bulk SMSs to millions of people (Parashar 2012). This movement showed that the ‘the virtual world is gradually finding its social relevance and people notwithstanding their geographical location are able to view/review/analyse events across the world’ (Parashar 2012: 4).

This movement laid the foundation for the Nirbhaya movement. The Nirbhaya case came as a final blow to the government when it proved to the people of the country that it was failing to protect its citizens. As a participant said, ‘it was all about the timing’ because the anger was already there and people were looking for a chance to vent (Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). Social media further fuelled a pre-existing anger. The people of the nation wanted change and this provided organisations and activists the perfect opportunity structure. The government

was vulnerable and had been trying to defend itself for the past two years already. Furthermore, the elections were due in 2014, which meant that the failure of the government to handle the situation would further reduce their chances for victory. During this period, the ruling Congress government wanted to prove to its people that it could deliver on its promises, whilst the opposition took every opportunity to highlight the incompetence of the ruling party. A participant, on this issue, stated that, ‘there was an enormous amount of anger that bound people together and the case took off. Once it took off it was like a ripple effect’ (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

Ayres (1999), argues about how events and changes in the global level can result in the creation of opportunity structures on a local level. In the case of the Nirbhaya movement, global changes played a huge role in creating the political opportunity structure for the start of the protest cycle. On November 25, 2012 the ‘One Billion Rising’ campaign was launched in order to take action to end violence against women on a global scale (Patel 2014). It was launched as a call for action based on the statistics that one in three women across the world face some form of sexual violence in her lifetime (WHO January 2016). This huge campaign highlighted issues related to gender violence and helped bring them to the limelight.

The uprisings in the Middle East also influenced the rise of protest activities in India. Constant updates on the Arab Spring, both on mainstream media and social media, not only made people aware of what was happening but also helped in restoring faith in the power of mass protests. The use of social media and mobile phones for protest activities in places like Egypt made people in India further realise the power of social media and how it could be used for both mobilisation and the building of national and transnational solidarity. The effect in the Middle East was evident from the various posters and hashtags used during both the anti-corruption movement and the Nirbhaya protests. The campaign called ‘I am Anna Hazare’ during the anti-corruption movement was similar to the ‘We are all Khaled Said’ campaign from the Egyptian uprising (Mitchell 2013). The protests in New Delhi post-Nirbhaya were also, on many occasions, compared with the uprisings in Tahrir Square and during the first week of the protest the hashtag

‘Tahrir Square’ was among the top trending topics on Twitter (Nandakumar & Prasad 24 December 2012).

The rise of social media and mobile phone users was another reason for the scale of the protest activities. A social media boom happened in India in 2012. Research firm SocialBakers estimated that in November, the number of Indian Facebook users swelled by 14 million in six months (Anwer & Shrinivasan 31 December 2012). In 2014, it was estimated that there were about 243 million Internet users which represented a penetration of about 19.19% of the current population (Internetlivestats 2014). According to a report published by the Internet and Mobile Association of India, there are 875 million mobile users in India and according to an Avendus Capital report, out of the total Internet users, 86 million accessed the Internet on their mobile devices in 2013 (Singh 12 January 2014).

Cheaper Smartphones and the growing telecommunications industry have together pushed India towards a digital revolution. Zafar Adeel, from the United Nations said, ‘It is a tragic irony to think that in India, a country now wealthy enough that roughly half of the people own phones, about half cannot afford the basic necessity and dignity of a toilet’ (United Nations 14 April 2010). The diffusion and easy availability of mobile phones and social media has helped create a new platform for activism in India. Over the last decade, online activism has encouraged the formation of new connections and collaboration between grassroots advocacy and service organisations, educational institutions, coalitions, unions, conferences, legacy media, policy makers, politicians and entrepreneurs (Gurumurthy 2004).

It is difficult to detach the media element when discussing the political opportunity structure and according to (Karatzogianni 2006: 69), ‘the media form a component of the political opportunity structure with both structural and dynamic elements. The media system’s openness to social movements is itself an important element of political opportunity’. Media has been the link connecting society to global or transnational events, which influences activities taking place in other national contexts (Olabs 2015; Ayres 1999). In another perspective Karatzogianni (2006), argues that media attention

provide support for the activities of political protests movements making such movements and/ or its political actor's involved key stakeholders in the struggle for political reform and social change

In case of the Nirbhaya protests, the role of the mainstream media also cannot be negated. As soon as the case was reported both national and international media covered it extensively. They not only reported the case in great detail but also highlighted other discourses including the failure of the government and women's safety and security. A participant states that 'the media highlighting the incident resulted in striking a chord in the mind of the people' (Participant 1, 6 March 2014, interview with author, London). Another participant agreed with this and said that in the age of the 24-hour news channels, there is a larger discussion on wider-ranging issues and media brings this discussion to the attention of the general masses. This definitely helped in building solidarity that led to the start of the protest cycles (Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

The place where the incident took place was another contributing factor. New Delhi is the capital of India, the seat of parliament and most big news and media channels are located there. Since New Delhi is the base of various bodies of authority, it is also the base for different activist organisations and NGOs. Apart from that it is also the home of some of India's best colleges and universities. Thus the case happening in Delhi made it possible for people from different avenues to gather and protest. A participant, in discussing the protests, emphasises that the location was a huge cause for the emergence and scale of the protests (Participant 1, 2 April 2014, interview with author, Skype).

Another aspect is the question of safety and security that has been a huge problem in Delhi for years. New Delhi has often been referred to as the 'rape capital of India' (Rukmini 19 August 2015). Data revealed by the National Crime Records Bureau showed that 1636 cases of rape were reported in 2014 in Delhi. The number of cases reported in Delhi in 2012 was 706 which accounted for about 17% of all the rape cases reported in the country (Rukmini 1 July 2014). However, activists believe that the

majority of rapes in Delhi go unreported as in other parts of India. The conviction rate is almost zero with one person being convicted in 2012 and was given a prison sentence of three years (Rao 2013). The Nirbhaya case was a prime example of the lack of safety and security in the city and the existing anger in the people of Delhi resulted in start of the protests.

McAdam (1996) suggests that a very important dimension of political opportunity is the presence of elite allies. In case of the Nirbhaya protests, another important aspect that led to further increase in mobilisation was the participation of celebrities and influential people from all walks of life. They not only supported the movement on various social media platforms but many of them even came out and walked on the streets with the other protestors. On their social media feeds they asked their fans and followers to join the protests both online and offline. The participation of these influential allies gave the movement a great impetus. Acclaimed filmmaker Shekhar Kapur tweeted, ‘Rape is NOT an act motivated by sexual desire. It’s an act of violence, depravation, domination and humiliation born of extreme self-loathing’ (Reuters 18 December 2012). Rahul Bose, an acclaimed India actor tweeted, ‘Gangrape and beating of girl in delhi today continues an urban trend of the sickening brutalisation of women’ (Reuters 18 December 2012). The support from celebrities inspired other people to come out and join the protest marches. One of the participants I interviewed is a popular actress in India and on commenting about her participation in the Nirbhaya case she said,

We were on the streets because we could no longer be in the house. We could not be caged. I wanted to see that we can walk together, believe together, say no together, say enough is enough together. People just opened their front doors and walked out. I don’t know who I walked along side and I did not care..... The spirit was there, the will was there, the urge to get out was intense but we did not know where and when. Social media made it possible. Social media helped create Tahrir Squares all over India and it is social media that would generate the fuel required to propel gender movements in India.

(Jaganathan, 7 March 2014, interview with author, London)

4.3 Framing Process

Following the cyberconflict framework, the framing process is the third dynamic of the resource mobilisation model that ICTs are thought to influence during social movement action (Olabs 2015). The framing process has come to be regarded as a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of new social movements. According to Zald (1996 :262), ‘frames are the specific metaphors, symbolic representations, and cognitive cues used to render or cast behaviour and events in an evaluative mode and to suggest alternative modes of action. Symbols, frames, and ideologies are created and changed in the process of contestation’. He further compares ideologies with frames and states that even though frames may be embedded in ideologies, ideology tends to be more complex and logical systems of beliefs compared to frames.

However, Garrett (2006) argues that, the framing process is aimed at justifying the claims of actors involved in a conflict whilst also exploiting the platform to provoke action through the positioning of socially and ethnically shared beliefs. Moreover symbols, frames and ideologies are created and changed in the process of contestation (Zald 1996). Zald (1996) further argues that the purpose of frames used by actors is to justify claims made by movement actors with the implication of motivating collective action. Thus, the management of such frames is crucial to the success of any mobilisation attempt targeted at individuals by movement actors (Olabs 2015).

ICTs and social media played a big role in constructing the narratives of the movement. The conversations taking place on different social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter not only helped in shaping the movement activities but also provided an avenue for protestors to form shared identities and develop solidarity. Online media platforms such a Youth Ki Awaz and blogs such as Kafila constantly posted articles that spoke critically about different aspects of gender. The founder of ‘Youth Ki Awaz’ (the voice of the youth) confirmed that the number of articles they received from young people across the country increased exponentially after the Nirbhaya case (Tiwari, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). These alternate platforms provided protestors an opportunity to tell their stories and share their views. This also played a big role in

shaping the demands for the movements. Several other Facebook groups and communities were formed online who were talking about the Delhi rape case but each of them had different agendas. While some groups spread information about the case and the protest marches, other groups like ‘Swift Justice in Delhi Gang-Rape Case’ was specifically formed to create general awareness about crimes against women while others like ‘Delhi Rape case, penalty to death’ were formed specifically to advocate the death penalty for the rapists. Few of the groups are still active but most of these groups were closed and become inactive after a few months of the incident.

Melucci (1995) argues that the ideological frames and cognitive frameworks for a movement are not always coherent or unified which can give rise to different even contradictory definitions. Flesher Fominaya (2010) agrees with this view and states that actors do not always have to be in complete agreement about the ideologies, beliefs, interests and goals of the larger movement to generate collective action. In case of the Nirbhaya movement, it was very difficult to frame a single ideology or a single narrative for the entire movement. Even though Nirbhaya was the main agenda and the uniting factor there were several other interlinked narratives, frames and demands. It was not a well-organised movement but more of a peoples’ movement that made it more difficult for the entire movement to have a consistent narrative. There were people in the protests who came from different backgrounds and who represented different organisations. In this context a participant comments, ‘it was not possible to mobilise people on one single issue. You do not really have the time to talk to people and sensitise them and make a consistent political strategy as you would device in an organised movement’ (Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

There were several people in the protests marches who joined because the incident angered them. However, often their understanding of gender was not clear and in reality the ideas were often very regressive and patriarchal. A participant said that, ‘even though they were in a protest against gender discrimination and violence against women, the attitude of the people were not very sensitised’ (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype). This was clear when some people highlighted issues like protecting the women as the main focus of the movement, which carried severely patriarchal overtones. There were also large sections of people for whom gender was

not their prime concern. They predominantly wanted change and answers from the government, and so the Nirbhaya protests were a convenient vehicle to voice their demands. For some others it was just a continuation of the anti-corruption movement. A participant stated that in many ways it felt that these protests were a continuation of the anti-government agitations and the frustrations against the government became a rallying point. She said, 'definitely, I do think that people wanted change and some of them just jumped into the gender bandwagon' (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). Another participant said, 'there were enough people who did not know what was happening and was just there to see what was going on, or have fun' (Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Another significant narrative that emerged from the movement was the demand for the death penalty and in many cases the main objective of the protests became the demand of death penalty as slogans and posters of 'Hang the Rapists' become one of the most visible images from the protests. Roy (22 December 2012) in her account of the protest activities in Raisina Hill wrote,

Some boys climb up the lamp posts, holding up their slogans: Hang Rapists, Stop Violence, Respect Women. They're received with loud cheers, and then an even bigger cheer goes up when one young woman scales a lamppost. Soon, all five of the ornate iron lamp-posts in the park near Raisina Hill have been taken over by young women, sending out sincere if mixed messages.... The protest stays calm and peaceful, settling down into a kind of rhythm, with separate knots performing their versions of homely street theatre.

(Roy 22 December 2012)

The majority of the people interviewed for the research were completely against the death penalty and even of those who were unsure, none actively supported the instatement of a death penalty. In this context, one participant states,

I had a sense, looking at the media reports and so on, that the movement might be getting hijacked by the demand for the death penalty. And as somebody who's very much on the left, I would call myself a pacifist and an anti-capital punishment person. Those are my politics in general. It was very disturbing for me to see that the entire energy of the movement was being dominated by images of mostly young men, but also sometimes young women, asking for the hanging of the rapist as the solution. And I thought that it had to go beyond that. I thought that it had to be much broader base, it had to address ordinary gender sensitisation, and it had to be about long term solutions. For me, personally, the death penalty was a no-no. But it wasn't even the main problem I had. It was the very juristic and legalistic and punishment oriented focus that for me was being morally incorrect.

(Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi)

The emphasis on the death penalty in some cases hijacked the movement and took attention away from issues that needed to be addressed. In talking about the death penalty, a participant said that people were angry because of the nature of the crime and they demanded the death sentence because they wanted the most severe form of punishment to be inflicted on the perpetrators. However, they did not put much thought or reasoning behind their demand (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). Another participant also stated that the demand for the death penalty was a way for the people to get momentary satisfaction without reflecting on the core issues behind such crimes (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

Even though the demand for death penalty, in some cases, became the rallying cry, most activists and feminist leaders were against it. This resulted in a rift between different groups that were present during the protests. A participant, while talking about this issue, recollected an incident that occurred during the protests. She said that at one point in the protest there were clearly two groups and two different opinions in terms of demands, one that supported the capital punishment and mostly consisted of young men while the other group consisted of people who clearly did not speak in favour of capital punishment. Both groups were firmly rooted in their ideologies and arguments between them got fairly heated with both sides attacking each other. Later the talk of the death

penalty turned to chemical castration. In this context the participant stated, 'a few days later it became about chemical castration as if that is more humane and as if that's a solution at all. As if it's the organ that is responsible for rape and not your entire attitude towards women' (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

It was observed by many of the participants that a large number of organisations were also present, purely for their personal agenda and to gain mileage out of the issue. A participant, in discussing her experience, said that while it was a people's movement and people wrote slogans and made posters with whatever they could, a piece of paper, their clothes or even their body, some organisations came with large printed posters that had their name and logo on it. She said that those people were craving for attention and they were not there essentially to give a voice to the movement but to 'take photographs and put them in their newsletters to generate publicity for themselves' (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype)

The presence of all major political institutions also, to a certain extent, co-opted the movement. They came with their own political agenda and the protests were a great opportunity for them to propagate their own ideology and attract more people towards their cause. A participant, who went to the protests as part of a political organisation, said that,

There were a lot of people and we had a great opportunity to interact with them. I don't know why, maybe in the heat of the moment they were already very receptive at that time and very conversational. That was a very important thing for me as an activist, as a mobiliser and as a facilitator of communication. We noted down numbers, we took contacts of people and they came again and re-joined the movement

(Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi)

He agreed that in his work as an editor of an online platform, he would have to be neutral. However, he had very strong political ideologies and was very committed to the

political organisation that he was a part of. Even though the ideas propagated by him were beneficial for the cause, it was also an opportunity for him to recruit more members towards his political organisation through the protests.

There were many organisations that also launched sub-movements within the bigger movement itself. One such sub-movement was called 'Bekhauf Azadi' (Freedom without fear) where activists tried explain to the participants of the protest that justice would not be served by simply hanging or castrating the perpetrators. 'Real justice' would be served by demanding the state to ensure total and unconditional freedom for women (Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). However, some activists tried to capitalise on the huge presence of the people and take advantage of their sentiments. In some cases it was for the betterment of the movement but in others, it was merely a case of self- promotion and recruitment.

Polletta & Jasper (2001), argues that collective identity and common ideologies are not always essential for mobilisation and political activities of the group provide the required solidarity. In such cases, movement identity serves the same purpose as the pre-existing collective identity. Irrespective of the divide in demands and several intersecting narratives, the group mostly remained united. The sole uniting factor was Nirbhaya and what happened to her. The inhumane nature of the crime had shaken people to its core, revealing both anger and a sense of insecurity. People wanted justice and change. Their demands might have been different but the need for justice and change was the underlying motivation for the entire movement.

4.4 Government Action and Change in Law

This last section of the chapter I highlight the outcome of the movement in terms of government reaction and changes in the law. From December 16, 2012 the streets of Delhi were flocked by thousands of protestors who wanted an answer. The outpouring of anger at the crime caught the government by surprise, and there was widespread criticism of its aggressive response to protesters, which included tear gas, water cannons

and beatings by riot police officers. The government invoked a terrorism law that prohibited even small gatherings, and it closed a huge portion of the capital to vehicular and pedestrian traffic (Gardiner 3 January 2013). No one from the government came to issue a public statement or informed the people about the steps that were being taken. For the government and keepers of law, it was a PR disaster and they had completely lost a battle they were accustomed to winning. According to Anwer & Shrinivasan (31 December 2012), ‘now there was a pesky entity, the public seeking to change the rules of the game. A teenager armed with a smartphone had used the magic platform called social media to devastating effect, catching the agents of the state flatfooted’.

Eventually, the Government tried to halt public anger by announcing a series of measures to make Delhi safer for woman, which included police patrols at night, checks on bus drivers and their assistants and a ban on buses with tinted windows or curtains. The Government also said that they would post the name, photographs and other details of the convicts on official websites in order to shame them (BBC 29 December 2012). The Delhi High Court told the Delhi police to file a report on the case status in two days after the incident and proper medical care for the rape victim and her male friend was also ordered. To improve the safety of woman in India a commission for inquiry was set up. Usha Mehra, a retired judge from the Delhi High Court, was asked to be a part of the one-member commission and to reconstruct the events of December 16, 2012 to identify lapses by the government and the police. It was ordered that the report must be delivered within three months’ time (Malik 26 December 2012). The issue was also discussed at length in the parliament. The media and individuals on social networking sites retained the passion for cause and carried the movement forward.

A separate commission, headed by Supreme Court judge J. S. Verma was also set up on December 23, 2012 to identify what changes should be made to the Criminal Law to provide more severe punishments for those convicted of sexual assault. The committee was asked to complete its report as a matter of urgency and submit its findings within thirty days (Verma et al. 2013) The Verma Commission handed over its reports to the Government on January 23, 2013, exactly thirty days after the commission was set up by the Government. First few words of the report stated that, ‘The constitution of this Committee is in response to the country-wide peaceful public outcry of civil society, led

by the youth, against the failure of governance to provide a safe and dignified environment for the women of India, who are constantly exposed to sexual violence' (Verma et al. 2013). The report put forward recommendations that included a change in the definition of rape and increased punishment for rapists.

The way the Verma commission involved the people of the country and women's organisations was exemplary. One of the participants was a part of the consultations committee for framing the report. In her interview she spoke about her experience. The government put advertisements in newspapers and encouraged people to respond with their recommendations both through post or through their website. They had more than seventy thousand responses coming in to the government. She said, 'somebody's father, somebody's brother, somebody's mother, who never really spoke about it was writing to Verma saying that 'I believe that this should be done in the new law'. So it was really seventy thousand citizens speaking up' (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). Along with that, consultations were held with women's organisations and activists where they were encouraged to present their views and recommendations.

A charge sheet was filed against the five people accused of the crime and apart from rape and murder, the other charges included destruction of evidence, the attempted murder of the woman's companion and a list of other crimes. The 650 page charge sheet was filed with a supplementary sheet that included the post mortem report from the Singapore hospital where the 23 year old student died two weeks after the gang-rape. The sixth person was a juvenile and his case was handled separately by the juvenile court. Rape cases in India can be held in court for years. However, the case against the five men was referred almost immediately to a new fast-track court set up to handle cases involving crimes against women. On the first day of trial, the prosecution called four witnesses, including the software engineer who was with the victim and tried to protect her from the men who brutally raped her. Before her death the victim had recorded her testimony which would be crucial for the prosecution along with the statement of the friend who was with her (Biswas & Manjesh 5 February 2013).

However, at 5 am on March 11, 2013, the main accused Ram Singh was found hanging from the ceiling with his clothes in the high security Tihar jail (Pandey et al. 12 March 2013). He used his shirts and threads from the mat to hang himself. It is speculated that he stood on a bucket to hang himself but, it is still unclear as to how the three other members of the cell did not wake up in the tiny room and how he reached the 10ft high ceiling. Parents and lawyer of Ram Singh alleged that he was murdered and asked for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe into the matter (Pandey et al. 12 March 2013).

Instead of waiting for the parliament to pass anti-rape laws, the government brought in an ordinance (in accordance to the recommendations made by the Verma Commission Report) that introduced tougher jail terms for crimes against women, including the death penalty for extreme cases of sexual assault. It was mandatory for the parliament to pass the changes before March 22, 2013, otherwise it would lead to the lapse of the ordinance (Prabhu & Ghosh 1 February 2013). However, the new proposal for a tougher anti-rape bill was delayed several times because senior ministers disagreed over some of the key issues in the proposal, such as whether the word rape, which is gender-specific, should replace the gender-neutral 'sexual assault' in the proposal in order to include male rapes, and how to define voyeurism and stalking, which the bill identified as criminal offenses for the first time in India (Malik 12 March 2013). In spite of the delay a group of ministers, headed by the then finance minister Mr. P Chidambaram, lowered the age of consent from 18 years to 16 years in the proposal for a new anti-rape law. Under the current law, sexual intercourse for those below the age of consent is considered statutory rape. Under the new provisions, cleared by the group of ministers, stalking and voyeurism had also been made non-bailable offences (Prabhu & Ghosh 13 March 2013). On March 21, 2013 session of Rajya Sabha (meaning the Council of States, is the upper house of the Parliament of India) the anti-rape bill was passed (The Times of India 22 March 2013).

The President gave his assent to the anti-rape bill two days before the Ordinance on the issue was going to lapse. After Presidential assent, the ordinance became the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act that amended various sections of the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and The Indian Evidence Act (The Times of India 4 April

2013). The new law sanctioned capital punishment only in two cases: firstly, if it led to death of the victim or left her in a vegetative state and secondly if the perpetrators were repeat offenders. The age of offence was still kept to eighteen but it stated that offenders could be subjected to a punishment of no less than twenty years and it might extend to life imprisonment and a substantial fine. In cases of acid attacks that caused harm to the victim, the convict would be subjected to a jail term of a minimum of ten years, which might again be extended to a life term. Offenders could suffer a penalty of five to seven years if they were involved in an acid attack. Stalking and voyeurism were also defined in the law for the first time as non-bailable offences if repeated the second time. It prescribed a punishment ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment if someone was caught trafficking a minor and a jail term of 14 years which could be extended to life imprisonment if the offender was involved in trafficking more than one minor. However, unlike the ordinance, it kept rape as a gender specific crime and only men could be booked for such offences (The Times of India 4 April 2013).

One of the highlights of the amendments was the considerable change in the definition of rape in India after the Nirbhaya case. The new definition of rape provided that a man was said to commit rape if his penis penetrated, to any extent, a woman's vagina, mouth, urethra or anus. A man could also be guilty of rape if he inserted, to any extent, any other part of his body or any other object into a woman or manipulated any part of the body of a woman to cause penetration (India Kanoon 2015). This was specifically included after the Nirbhaya case when an iron rod was inserted into the victim heavily damaging her internal organs. This also brought forward the extent of violence and torture that is involved in crimes against women such as rape. Under the new law a man was said to commit rape even he applied his mouth to the vagina, anus, urethra of a woman. Finally, a man was said to have carried out rape if he forced the woman to do any of the above with him or another man. Gang rape was also added as an offense in the amendments.

Reporting of cases of rape and sexual assault is also another huge problem in India. Apart from the fact that the police are often unwilling to register cases, the victims themselves, in a lot of instances, do not report crimes committed against them (Sirnate & Nagarathinam 25 April 2015). This is extremely common in cases of incestuous rapes

or sexual assaults that take place within the family (Talwar 2013). Women also do not report crimes due to the fear of harassment in the hands of the police or the court where she is asked to give personal details of the crimes committed against her or insensitive questioning by the defence counsels during cross examination who tend to focus on the victim's past sexual history. Following the recommendations of the Verma Committee, it was enforced that in the case of rape or sexual violence in which consent is an issue, evidence of character of the victim or experiences of past sexual experiences would not be relevant on the issue of such consent or the quality of the consent. It would also be an offense for police officers not to record any information given to them with respect to the crime (Talwar 2013).

New provisions added to the law also stated that a rape victim's statements should not only be recorded before a magistrate but also be treated as examination-in-chief. There are several advantages to this new provision. Firstly, in India, rape cases go on for several years. Sometimes even the charge sheet takes a year to be filed and the statement of the victim cannot be recorded without the charges being framed. So victims are summoned months after the incident to testify. Secondly, a statement recorded by the magistrate would be in a much less intimidating environment as compared to the court, allowing the victims to express themselves freely. Finally, if the statements are recorded up front they cannot later be retracted under pressure, which is also very common occurrence in India (Talwar 2013). If the victim is a minor, above the age of sixteen or physically or mentally disabled, they will not be required to go to the police station but the police would have to come to their residence to report the crime.

In this context, it is also important to discuss what people consider to be classed as 'change'. In the interviews I conducted, when talking about change, participants would often use the term 'real change'. When I asked what they meant by 'real change' some participants confirmed that by real change they meant changes that were visible to them and would create a difference in their lives. However, what people considered 'real change' differed from one person to another. For example, one participant commented that she saw the legal reforms as 'real change' (Participant 1, 6 March 2014, interview with author, London) but another participant stated that he did not consider the legal

reforms enforced after the Nirbhaya case to be ‘real change’ because India still needs to go long way to overcome the misogyny in society and the reforms would become real change when they are implemented correctly by the people in authority (Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

In talking about changes post Nirbhaya, especially the changes in law, a lot of the participants believed the changes to be purely cosmetic. The Nirbhaya case put great amounts of pressure on the government. Together with their unpopularity because of the cases of corruption reported against them between 2010 and 2012 and because of the upcoming elections in 2014, the government wasted no time to implement the amendments in the law in order to save face. The Mathura case (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Sociopolitical and Media Environment') took place in 1972 and the amendments were implemented in 1983, about 11 years after the actual incident (Wright 9 January 2013). However, in this case, the amendments were put in place in little more than 3 months after the incident took place on December 16, 2012.

In this context a participant states, ‘because of this global exposure, the Indian government and people in authority now know that they are being watched, not only by the Indian population but also by people across the globe. More support means that our movement shall grow stronger’ (Participant 6, 23 September 2014, interview with author, Skype). However, proper enforcement of the law is equally important as implementation of law. Another participant commented, ‘the government does not do anything without public pressure. So to that extent, the changes are knee jerk and reactive. I mean the government make a change for their own protection. So changes are reactive but I do not think that they have become proactive as yet’ (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Another issue that was debated widely after the Nirbhaya case was the issue about age of consent being lowered from 18 to 16 years. India is changing, the middle class is expanding and there is an explosion of more liberal sexual values. Thus, between the age of 16 and 18 if two willing participants engaged in consensual sex it would be

considered statutory rape, the man would be called a rapist and the woman a victim. Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code states that a man would have committed rape of a woman if she is under the age of 18 irrespective of the attack taking place, with or without her consent. In this case Talwar (2013) comments,

The spirit of the Nirbhaya movement represented, to my mind, a largely collective wish to respect the autonomy a woman has over her body, the right to fight against any violations and the corollary right, which is to share the body's pleasures freely with any one of her choice. The government has reacted in a predictable paternalistic fashion.

(Talwar 2013: 51)

The Verma committee report was considered to be exemplary and appreciated by all as it addressed core gender issues. However, when the recommendations of the committee were adopted by the government in the form of a law, it was greatly diluted. The two most important recommendations that were excluded from the new law were marital rape and rape by armed forces. Marital rape was not included in the new amendments as the lawmakers decided that it would potentially disrupt the institution of marriage and the entire family system in India thus denying that rape can occur within the sacred bonds of marriage (Rana 26 March 2013). Traditionally in an Indian family the role of the wife is of a submissive, adjusting and docile homemaker and sex post marriage is considered both obligatory and a taboo (Rath 2007). This has resulted in very few open discussions about sex. Some legal experts have also said that the government was unwilling to include marital rape in the law because then they would have to change the laws based on religious practices that still exist in India. For example, According to the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, a wife is duty bound to have sex with her husband (Rana 26 March 2013). Religion is a sensitive topic in India and no government would want to hurt the religious sentiment of its people resulting in bigger problems.

The armed forces, especially in the disturbed areas are still effectively immune from prosecution for rape and sexual assault as they are protected by special laws such as Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. The Verma Committee had noted that these laws

legitimize impunity for systematic or isolated sexual violence by making government permission necessary before security forces can be prosecuted for criminal offences. Since permissions are rarely granted and these provisions in effect put security forces above the law, violating victims' rights to remedy. Thus, the armed forces 'benefit from the boys' club protections that are enhanced in situations of sanctioned violence, committed against communities they are seriously alienated from' (BBC 28 March 2013).

The new law introduced harsher punishment to cover situations where the couple would be living separately stating that if a man had sexual intercourse with his wife, who was living separately, without her consent it would be punished with a minimum imprisonment of two years which may extend up to seven years (Talwar 2013).

Therefore, even after the amendments, there is no law in India to protect women within the bounds of marriage. Section 375, the provision of rape in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) also mentioned as its exception clause that 'sexual intercourse by man with his own wife, the wife not being under 15 years of age, is not rape' (India Kanoon 2015) . The laws about sexual assault states that rape stands within marital bonds only if the wife is under twelve years of age. If the wife is between twelve and sixteen years, a less serious offense is committed thus calling for milder punishment and if the wife is above eighteen, there is no law to protect her (Rath 2007).

Women's organisations and activists across the country were agitated by the exclusion of marital rape from the new laws. One of the participants said that the changes in law were superficial and did not address the core issues that actually affect the power relation and the power dynamics that exist in the country. She states, 'people need to understand that sexual violence is crime of power and not a crime of lust, as it is made out to be. Things like family, religion, politics, military and all others that affect the power relations in the country need to be looked at and strike at the heart of the problem' (Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). Another participant on commenting about this said that rape was not merely an isolated incident and in order to understand and address the problem there is an urgent need to understand the complexities of the rape culture. She further stated, 'rape is not something that just happens to women, there are other questions that need to be looked

at like, why and where is it originating from? Why is misogyny taking this form? These discourses need to become more prominent' (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

Another failure of the new law was that it only protected women and failed to recognise the sexual assaults of men and transgendered people. Originally the term rape was to be replaced by what they considered to be a more gender neutral term, sexual assault. However, the Nirbhaya case brought back attention to the rape of women by men and it being recognised as a patriarchal crime stemming from male power and dominance (Stokes 11 September 2014). The question that many activists raised was why should men not be protected and why crime against women should be considered as more important than crime against men. A participant, who runs an organisation that works with men to end violence against women, said that this idea also stemmed from patriarchal values which state that men due to their masculinity cannot be raped or abused and thus in order to look at overall gender issue deeper questions about misogyny and patriarchy needs to be addressed (Sadani, 29 October 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). The rape of a young girl can be charged under the Indian Penal Code, however, a young boy who has been sodomised or abused cannot be charged under the Indian Penal code and can only be charged under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (Talwar 2013).

4.5 Conclusion

In order to understand the emergence, development and outcome of social movements, Karatzogianni (2006), in the cyberconflict framework specifically uses resource mobilisation theories and new social movement theories to address the effects of ICTs and social media on mobilisation structures, political opportunity structure and framing process. In this chapter, I have analysed the Nirbhaya case using the sociopolitical aspects of the cyberconflict framework. The chapter has been divided into two main sections. In the first section, I have discussed the Nirbhaya case focusing on three main aspects, mobilisation structures, political opportunity structure and framing processes as witnessed in the Nirbhaya protests in order to understand the emergence and

development of one of the biggest gender movements in India and also to understand the effects of ICTs and social media on the movement.

In order to fully understand the use and impact of ICTs within a movement, the cyberconflict framework divides the mobilisation structure into sub categories such as participation, recruitment, leadership, tactics and goals (Garrett 2006). When the news of the protests reached the people they gathered in large numbers on the streets to show their solidarity and protest against the incident. The participants were both from organisations and also individuals who participated because they felt strongly for the cause. Social media and mobile phones played a large role in the process, helping in the circulation of news related to the time and venue. In this context a participant states, 'I came to know about the protest through a friend but even on the days when I was not present at the protest I would follow what is happening there through Facebook or Twitter. This helped me remain connected to the movement even though I was not physically present there' (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Nirbhaya movement was the participation of the individual. Social media played a big role in bringing together individuals from different sections of society and united them under the same cause. According to one of the participants, the participation of individuals has created a big shift in the nature and content of gender activism in India (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). As witnessed in the Nirbhaya case, a lot of defining voices of the movement, especially online, were individual men and women who were sharing their views and experiences and not organisations and NGOs. This resulted in a wide range of ideas, thoughts and opinions in the activist space. A large section of the mobilisation structure was also formed through networks of kinship or friendship and large groups of friends, family members, peers and colleagues formed the core structures of the protests marches. ICTs and social media also had a big role to play in that as the ability to send group messages on social media sites like Facebook or mobile phone applications like Whatsapp helped in spreading the message with speed and convenience.

The women's movement in India has always been predominantly leaderless (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). In talking about the nature of the networked society with the use of ICTs and social media Castells (1996) talks about the structures being predominantly horizontal, rhizomatic and leaderless. Even though the Nirbhaya movement was predominantly leaderless, self-appointed leaders were often noticed in the protest marches. Some tried to keep the crowd calm while others tried to convince other protestors about their demands. When discussing gender movements as a whole, an interesting leadership trend has been noticed online. In this context a participant stated that, previously feminist activists were unsure about taking up leadership positions. However, in the digital environment, many of the online feminist campaigns operate in short cycles running only for a short span of time. So activists are more willing to take up leadership of a specific campaign only for that specific time frame. Once the campaign is over, their leadership would be over as well (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

The growing discontent against the government and the need for change provided the perfect political opportunity structure for the Nirbhaya movement. Global discourse and campaigns on gender, and the global increase in digital activism also helped create a national level opportunity structure in India. The anger against the government, especially in the urban educated middle class was channelled into the Nirbhaya movement. The entire movement was framed around Nirbhaya and demanding justice for what happened to her. It was not a well-organised movement but instead a people's movement that made it difficult for the entire movement to have a consistent narrative. There were several people from different backgrounds who participated in the protests and often their understanding of gender was not clear, and on some occasions they were also regressive and patriarchal. This was especially clear when people highlighted issues, such as protecting women, as the main focus of the movement, an idea that is itself one of patriarchy. Another significant demand that emerged from the movement was the demand for the death penalty and on many occasions it took over the movement. Even though the demand for the death penalty emerged as a significant issue, most activists and feminist leaders were against it. However, irrespective of the divide in demands and several intersecting narratives within the movement the group mostly remained united by the demand for justice for Nirbhaya.

ICTs tend to have consequences for the ways in which social movement interact with their environment. ICTs improved the movement's capacity to act in a coordinated and coherent way to react more quickly to external challenges. It also helped organisations and individuals to be less dependent on the established mass media in conveying their messages to a broader audience base. The action and reaction followed each other in very short cycles, and the speed of diffusion of new ideas, tactics and arguments considerably increased. ICTs also helped to facilitate mobilisation across large territories to reach a wider audience and create global impact (Van De Donk et al. 2004). In this context a participant commented, 'online conversations are generating the fuel required to propel gender movements in India' (Participant 7, 7 March 2014, interview with author, London).

It is difficult to organise and strategize such a decentralised movement and steps need to be taken in order to establish vital connections and collaborations in order to keep the new age gender activism alive in India. Campaigning through a medium that people are comfortable with is creating a wave of awareness in society. As one of the participants comments,

The Nirbhaya case has resulted in change. Real change. This movement in particular, has reminded people about the power that they hold. It has empowered them. It may not succeed. But the people, who have raised their voices, are now much more fearless than they used to be. The real change happens inside minds, not on the outside.

(Participant 6, 23 September 2014, interview with author, Skype)

The next chapter: 'Nirbhaya and Beyond- The Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India' is based on the media theory section of cyberconflict framework and aims to analyse the use of ICTs and social media during the Nirbhaya protests. Further, in the next chapter I also talk about transnational gender activism in India and the changing nature of gender activism with the use of ICTs and social media.

Chapter 5: Nirbhaya and Beyond- Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India

Post the Nirbhaya case on December 16, 2012, India witnessed an intense introspection into the nature of Indian society and the structures of governance that failed to keep the women of the country safe from sexual harassment and abuse. The discussions, on both mainstream and social media, varied from the nature of patriarchy to the structure of the family, from law reforms to law enforcement, from power dynamics within society to nature of governance, from sexuality to the cause of sexual violence, from women's safety in the streets to women's security within the family. India had not previously witnessed such open conversations about different aspects of gender both on a public and on a deeply personal level. Simon-Kumar (2014) in this context commented that what the Delhi rape case did was different and unusual. It generated 'both publicness and personalisation of rape' in a way that had never happened before (Simon-Kumar 2014: 452).

This chapter is based on the media theory section of the cyberconflict framework (see Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations'). In this chapter I not only talk about the significance of using of ICTs and social media in the Nirbhaya movement but also for gender activism as a whole in India. I highlight some of the contemporary discourses on gender and sexual violence that emerged in the public sphere post the Nirbhaya case and talk about some of the significant changes. I begin by analysing the use of ICTs and social media specifically during the Nirbhaya protest to understand who were using this technology, for what purpose and in what capacity. This helps determine the significance of emerging technology in gender activism in India. Following that, I discuss some specific changes in terms of gender activists that were witnessed post-Nirbhaya. Simon-Kumar (2014) argues the importance of women across India using personal experiences of harassment, violence and assault to create a community of solidarity. I further discuss how these very private stories, shared in very public places, have become extremely significant and resulted in driving forward the gender movement in India. In this chapter I further discuss transnational activism and how social media and ICTs have helped in the globalisation

of the gender movement in India. Finally I explore the changing nature of gender activism in India with the help of ICTs and social media

5.1 Use of Media and ICTs in the Nirbhaya Protests

As previously stated, in India today it is estimated that there are about 243 million Internet users, which represents a penetration of about 19.19% of the current population (Internetlivestats 1 July 2014). According to a report published by the Internet and Mobile Association of India, there are 875 million mobile users in India and according to an Aventus Capital report, out of the total Internet users, 86 million accessed the Internet on their mobile devices in 2013. (Singh 12 January 2014). Cheaper smartphones and the growing telecommunications industry have pushed India towards a digital revolution. The diffusion and easy availability of mobile phones and social media have helped create a new platform for activism in India. ICTs and social media over the last decade have encouraged the formation of new connections and collaborations between grassroots advocacy and service organisations, educational institutions, coalitions, unions, conferences, legacy media, policy makers, politicians and entrepreneurs (Martin & Valenti 2012)

So when the news of the Nirbhaya rape reached the masses it created an Internet revolution that India had never witnessed before. In this respect Barn (9 January 2013) commented, 'Well - going by the headlines in Indian newspapers, social media has played a significant role - 'social media feeds protests fire', 'social media turns pivot for Delhi protests' and 'The year social media came of age in India'. On Google Trends' search volume index, 'Delhi gang rape', 'Rape in Delhi' and 'gang-rape victim' were among the top search phrases in India over the week and it reached a peak on December 20, 2012 (Nandakumar & Prasad 24 December 2012). 'Rashtrapati Bhavan' (the residence of the president of India), 'Tahrir Square' (a reference to street protests that took place in Egypt during the Arab Spring last year) and 'Raisina Hill' (the area in New Delhi, which houses some of the most important government buildings including President's House, Secretariat buildings and House of Parliament. One of the biggest protest marches was organised here), were also among the other top trends during the first week of the protest (Nandakumar & Prasad 24 December 2012).

Adhvith Dhuddu, founder and CEO of Bangalore-based social media management firm Alive Now said, ‘what is happening is an online agitation. People are asking the lawmakers to wake up through these social networks’ (Nandakumar & Prasad 24 December 2012). In about four days, Change.org, an online petition platform, received more than 65,000 signatures for an appeal seeking the intervention of the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, and Chief Justice of India Altamas Kabir. The petition called ‘President, CJI: Stop Rape Now!’ was initiated by ex-journalist Namita Bhandare and demanded the government and judiciary to take special notice of the escalation of gender violence in India and work toward implementing solutions designed to make Indian a better and safer place for women. The petition collected about 674,317 signatures (Bhandare 19 December 2012).

Facebook has its second largest user base in India (The Economic Times 22 January 2015) and several groups were created to protest, spread the message and to mobilise people. In talking about the use of social media and mobile phones in the Nirbhaya case, a participant said that she noticed a huge change in the way people started using mobile phones and social media to share their anger and talk about issues openly. She said, ‘the inhibition, the ignorance was kicked off, the disinterest was kicked off and people were actively getting on. Young people were taking charge on social media not just for issue but for the nitty-gritties of every issue related to violence against women, gender roles and gender stereotypes’ (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

Another participant argues that social media has changed the ways in which people perceive the idea of ‘protesting’ in India. In many ways, a protest is perceived to be inherently violent and people would not associate themselves with it unless it had massive significance in their own lives. Words like protest and activism have gained a negative connotation. He said that, ‘with social media and mobile phones the idea of protest has changed. It has gone through a lot of cycles where people now understand that a protest does not need to be violent and in some cases should not be violent. The idea of protest can be to raise their voice against something through social media’ (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). Thus a lot of people who would not usually participate in protests got involved through different social media platforms and mobile applications. It also provided people with alternative platforms to

voice their views and opinions that they would not be comfortable discussing or would not know where to talk about previously.

On a social media platform free speech is unhindered. 2012 saw social media creating a new phenomenon. According to Anwer and Shrinivasan (31 December 2012), 'it saw the rise of the virtually connected Indian youth, which is likely to redraw the terms of engagement between the state and its urban population'. On December 2012, a pew research study established that nearly 45% of Indian web users, most of them from urban areas, connect on social media to discuss politics. Only Arab countries scored higher than India on this account. The numbers were backed by GlobalWebIndex, which noted in their September 2012 report that India was the third most socially active country with around 78 points (Anwer & Shrinivasan 31 December 2012). Barn (10 March 2013) further states,

What has been striking about the Indian protests is that while they were led by both young men and women, who were educated, urban and middle class, they reached out and connected with others from a diverse range of backgrounds throughout Indian society. It is evident that India as a country is witnessing a significant technological revolution.

(Barn 10 March 2013)

Official data released in 2011 showed that rape cases had jumped almost 875% over the past 40 years, from 2,487 in 1971 to 24,206 in 2011. 572 cases were reported in New Delhi in 2011, more than 600 cases were reported in 2012, 1441 in 2013 and 1813 in 2014, justifying the title 'rape capital' given to New Delhi (Singh Shah et al. 4 January 2013; Rukmini 19 August 2014). Human rights activists point out that, due to under reporting, the real figures are likely to be much higher (Brown 4 January 2013). The brutal rape of Nirbhaya enraged the nation and questioned the lack of the security for woman in Indian society. Meera Vijayan, a charity consultant from Bangalore commented, 'I have been hooted at, I've been called names and told to dress modestly, and let me remind you this is from people my own age and not older conservative

people. This girl could have been me, it could have been any of my friends and no-one would have taken us seriously' (Brown 4 January 2013).

After the incident, there was a lot of conversation about men's attitude toward women in India, as well as women's place in society. However, victim blaming is still a very harsh reality in India and many people including politicians and religious leaders still blamed the victim. Tweets from @shivendraINDIA, who called himself an assistant review officer in the Allahabad High Court read 'why that gal was enjoying with her boyfriend? is it indian culture? Girl who was raped in delhi, shud not have followed western culture' (MacMillan 20 December 2012) Comments like that shocked the nation but he was not alone. Tweets from @maheep Kapoor stated,

Sorry but I think that Delhi gals r too modern so that Delhi is becoming rape capital nice girls don't go out at night with men and get on city buses. They also should not fall prey to the West with its skimpy clothing, loose morals, premarital sex or other choices that women are allowed to decide for themselves in most countries. India, with its stated goal of equality for everyone, is supposed to be one of those places.

(MacMillan 20 December 2012)

Abhijeet Mukherjee, the son of the President of India dismissed women who had flocked to the streets to protest against the case as 'dented and painted', comments for, which he later apologised (Dasgupta 27 December 2012). Such comments made the people of India think even more critically about the position of women in modern Indian society. Sexual abuse is much more than just physical abuse, it is damaging on many other levels. It affects a victim mentally, emotionally and psychologically. Vijayan (3 January 2013) in a citizen journalism report for CNN commented,

The problem with a society where violence is so inherent is that no one recognises it. No one understands it. This is one of the reasons why rape is still not seen as a human rights violation in India. Most politicians have serious rape

charges against them, most policemen view rape victims as perpetrators and often commit the crime themselves - so what chance do millions of ordinary girls like me have when it comes to finding justice. I hope things change, but then again - I don't know how long that will be.

(Vijayan 3 January 2013)

Desai (3 January 2013), the author of 'Sea of Innocence', a book that analyses the psychology of men and society towards women, said that gang rape denotes,

'Sharing of spoils', a criminal male bonding that moves away from all forms of recreation or common forms of entertainments. Often videos of such acts of atrocities are shared on the Internet or through mobile devices. Such acts have an inbuilt voyeuristic arousal and thus making sex a public performance and not a private act. She further states, 'it also depicts a level of extreme sexual frustration — combined with a perverted sense of machismo, where sex is closely connected with violence. It is only about self-gratification.

(Desai 3 January 2013)

The Nirbhaya case also raised questions about the true nature and reasons behind rape. In this respect a participant commented that in order to find a solution to rape it is important to recognise the real reason behind rape. It is important to realise that it is not a crime of lust but of power' (Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Social media played a huge role in the facilitation of the protest activities after the Nirbhaya incident. However, a large section of the participants interviewed for the research also spoke about the important role played by mainstream media to galvanise the population. After the case, every popular news channels constantly showed updates from the case, footage from the protest marches and also raised question about issues related to the position of women in the Indian society. As a participant noted, every household had their televisions on and they were getting constant updates about what

was happening. The extensive coverage and constant viewing of images related to the incident further channelised the anger of the people and created the mass solidarity that was essential to drive the movement forward (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

In this context a participant drew an interesting analogy and compared the use of social media for activism in the Middle East and India. She argues that whereas social media was the key tool for activism in the Middle East, in India mainstream media was probably the primary media outlet that helped the movement to emerge and sustain. She further states,

If you are talking about the Egypt eruption kind of impact of social media, I don't see it. No. That was different. The whole role of social media, whether it was in Egypt or in Tunisia, where social media became the tool to bringing people together, to connect with the outside world, to let them know what is happening and that was amazing. That was social media's biggest role in a people's movement. There TV channels were cut down and people, only through tweets, could find each other, connect to each other and share what is happening with each other. I did not see any such thing in India. I did see it playing a role in terms of updates, spreading the word a little wider. But it was TV that was more effective than anything else.

(Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype)

A lot of comparisons have been drawn between the movements in Egypt and India. In the anti-corruption movement right before the Nirbhaya case, supporters started a campaign called 'I am Anna Hazare' similar to the 'We are all Khaled Said' campaign from the Egyptian uprising (See Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework). Barn (9 January 2013) also compared the Nirbhaya protests to the Arab Springs saying, 'so to what extent were the India protests organised by Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media? And were these mass protests the Indian spring?' (Barn 9 January 2013). Tripathi & Chandani (2014) also

compared the use of social media in Egypt and India by comparing the Internet usage in both the countries. 24% of total population in Egypt uses Internet, where as in India approximately 11% of total population uses Internet. So number of Internet users in ratio to the population is far less in India as compared to Egypt. In their study they concluded that the Egyptian population was much more 'tech-savvy' compared to the Indian population with considerably larger number of female Facebook users (Tripathi & Chandani 2014).

There was also a considerable difference in terms of the media environment, as social media was the only tool available for activism in Egypt. However, the case was very different in India. The 24 hour news channels picked up the case before social media. The constant and detailed reporting of the case helped in the emergence and sustenance of the movement. According to Rao (19 March 2013), 'media continued to legitimise the protests by the young, educated, urban population and to give a voice to their pent-up frustration at the inefficiency and corruption of the system and not simply to view this as a 'law and order' problem'. Karatzogianni (2006) states that media plays a crucial role in the success of a social movement and it is important to correctly frame a movement for it to have the right media impact. In the Nirbhaya protests, social media and mainstream media worked together leading to the emergence and development of the case.

Whilst 24 hour news channels did help by broadcasting the case and gender concerns in every household, social media helped in creating a community and generating solidarity and mobilisation. It gave people an alternative platform to discuss and debate. It also helped in spreading the message and getting a whole new demographic of people involved in both online and offline activism. Some of the participants who regularly use social media to organise and mobilise protesters stated that the main role played by social media in the Nirbhaya case was to raise consciousness and keep the movement active. One of the participant who has regularly participated in online activism stated that gender movements in India have usually been issue based, and so the movement dies down after its demands have been achieved. But in this particular case, conversations on social media have resulted in the sustainability of the movement by keeping the conversations alive and raising consciousness even after the actual

movement ended (Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). Another participant who is a gender activists and an expert in helping women's organisations develop technical support and online organising argues that social media has created an alternative platform for activism but in a lot of the cases the activism has been successful in India because of the support from mainstream media (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). However, all participants interviewed for this research spoke about the massive role played by social media and ICTs in the success of the Nirbhaya case and potential of using the Internet, social media and mobile phones for gender activism in India.

5.2 Personalisation of Sexual Violence

One of the participants of the interviews recalls her experience of online activism post Nirbhaya and says that ‘gender activism in India came up in a big way when people started coming forward and sharing their stories. The Internet was a platform for women to come forward, anonymously in many cases, to talk about assaults and sexual abuse’ (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype). ICTs and mobile phones have resulted in the blurring of lines between the private and the public, the real and the virtual (De Certeau 1993; Bassett 2003; Crary 2001). Plummer (2002) states that the wall between private and public has crumpled resulting in our most private and personal narratives having the freedom to become public in a way that was not possible before the advent of ICTs. So, according to him, we have moved from a very ‘private personal story’ to a much more ‘public personal tale’ (Plummer 2002: 8). Foster (2015) conducted a study related to tweeting about sexism and she concluded that tweeting about sexism could improve the wellbeing of a women. Through her study she concluded that when women were asked to tweet about sexism, they were tweeting in collective ways resulting in creating collective action, solidarity and increase of wellbeing in women (Foster 2015).

Previously it was mainly women’s organisations and non-profits who were responsible for spreading awareness and creating solidarity. However, with social media, individuals unaffiliated with women’s organisations have been able to take up this role.

People are talking about issues openly on social media and in mainstream media that they would not have discussed even at home a few years ago (Jaganathan, 7 March 2014, interview with author, London). Platforms like 'Youth Ki Awaz' (the voice of the youth) and 'Got stared At' have given women the opportunity to share their personal experiences of harassment and violence, not only to raise awareness, but also to create solidarity and inspire other women. In talking about the concept of 'Got stared At' the founder of the website stated that the platform was launched so that women could share the pictures of what they were wearing when they were harassed along with their story. The platform received overwhelming response and people shared pictures of themselves in a wide range of outfits including traditional Indian clothes, western wear and even burka (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). This campaign was specifically launched to create awareness about street harassment in India. Women in India who wear western clothes are often blamed for their own harassment saying that they were asking for it when they decided to wear that kind of clothing (Kearl 2010). Through their campaign, 'Got stared At' also wanted to raise awareness about the fact that clothes are not the real reason behind street harassment as women, irrespective of what they wear or do, can be subjected to violence. Therefore, to fight street harassment deeper issues of patriarchy and misogyny need to be addressed (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Urban women in India, who are highly educated and have successful careers, still have to overcome several gender barriers and stereotypes every day, including the basic rights such as how to dress, where to go and what time is safe to return home. This not only limits their movement but also their freedom of choice. Therefore, women's safety in public places, their rights to dress and freedom of choice were some of the main issues that were discussed the public sphere after Nirbhaya. In many organisations women now occupy leadership positions. However, one of the participants stated that while there are large numbers of women who are coming out in support of other women, there are some other women who succumb to the system and even participate in the process of discrimination (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype). She also states that post-Nirbhaya many firms were compelled to implement safety standards for women including a fixed time for them to leave work, after, which the office would have arrange for safe transportation for them to return home. However, many companies reacted to that by employing lesser number of women (Participant 5,

11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype). This was done irrespective of laws protecting women against discrimination and abuse in the workplace, such as the Vishakha guidelines (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Sociopolitical and Media Environment'), being in place.

A very important slogan that emerged after the Nirbhaya case was 'silence no more', which was created in order to inspire women to step out and either talk about their experiences or report crimes committed against them. The same slogan was used by the 'Nirbhaya' play, a testimonial theatre piece that was created post-Nirbhaya, where all the performers had experienced some form of sexual violence in their lives. Throughout the piece, the performers spoke about their own stories and experiences. The main aim of the play was to inspire people to break their silence about violence and abuse. Several people, after watching the play, came out on social media and spoke about their experiences (Participant 4, 6 March 2014, interview with author, London). The play has its own social media pages and website through which the conversation is carried on even when they are not performing. A participant, in this context, said that she has noticed a large number of feminist blogs emerge in the recent past where people have been sharing their stories or even discussing feminism and gender equality. In such cases social media and the Internet have been extremely useful, as they have allowed these bloggers to find their voice, a voice that would have been otherwise silenced (Subramaniam, 25 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Women have found several innovative approaches to fight against abuse and many women have been using mobile phones in India to shame the offenders by either using their cell phones to film what is happening or taking pictures of the perpetrator. These pictures or videos are then uploaded on social media. The non-reporting of crimes, especially those related to sexual violence, is a huge problem in India. However, post Nirbhaya the number of rape cases reported across the country increased considerably. The table below gives us an idea about the cases registered and conviction rates in India from 2011 to 2013.

Table 3: Rape Cases Registered and Conviction Rates in India from 2011 to 2013

Year	Cases registered	Cases Registered per day	Cases convicted	Cases Convicted per day	Persons arrested	Persons arrested per day
2011	24206	66	4072	11	28878	80
2012	24923	68	3563	9	31117	85
2013	33707	92	5101	14	42115	115

Priya 10 March 2015

Source: <https://factly.in/rape-cases-in-india-statistics-has-anything-changed-after-the-nirbhaya-incident-part-1/>

To a great extent this has happened because the attention received by the Nirbhaya case made women believe that they have support and if they do not get that support from people in authority, they can find it in an alternative platform. In this respect a participant commented that post-Nirbhaya a lot more women were reporting rape because for the first time they felt that they had the social sanction. She further states, ‘women have always been told to keep quiet about assaults. But suddenly there were cases being reported all around and because finally they had the social sanction’ (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype).

India has a long history of harassment by the police and people in authority when it comes to cases of sexual violence (see Chapter 3: ‘Brief history of the Indian Women’s Movement and Tracing out the Socio-Political and Media Environment’). In this context a participant argues that a rape victim has to go through severe abuse in the hands of her perpetrator and then she has to relive the whole experience in the form of mental abuse at the hand of the authority (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). Due to the hostility, victim blaming and trivialisation, a large number of women are not willing to report the crimes committed against them (Purkayastha et al. 2003). Women also often find it increasingly difficult to speak to their families about their experience and get support from them. This has been largely because of the concepts of ‘honour’ and ‘dignity’ that exist even today, as well as the shame and stigma attached to sexual

violence. Thus women and girls are largely asked to keep quite. In this context a participant comments,

The law enforcement machinery does not work in India the way it should. So women and girls do not really want to go to the cops. Again they cannot speak to their families because of moral censorship and the victim might be held responsible or told that they somehow provoked it. In this situation you are either forced to be silence or you can discuss it with a few of your friends. This has created a huge vacuum in society that social media can fill in.

(Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype)

Thus social media has not only created an alternative space for women to share their experiences but also created space where women can get solidarity and support. It has also helped in creating a platform that has given voice to women who would have otherwise been isolated both by their families and the system (Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). Apart from this, it has also created an alternative platform for communities, such as the LGBT community or people with disabilities, who have been largely isolated in general from the Indian society. Social media and ICTs have provided them with an alternative space where they can communicate freely with like-minded individuals or people with shared experiences (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). This has resulted in a feeling of acceptance, developing valuable bonds and creating a sense of belonging, which they are deprived from in the wider society. A lot of people belonging to the queer community experience a great deal of fear when considering whether or not to come out and speak freely about their sexuality and their experiences because the majority of the voices offline are still anti-queer. According to a participant, ‘with the coming of the Internet, collectives have been formed, the voices that have come out are much bolder, much stronger, much more in number. When you see something that is already being talked about and that has been in your head for a while, you are more prone to take it up’ (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

ICTs have also created a platform for both rural women and poor urban women to tell their stories, which otherwise would have been lost. Mobile phones have played a big role in this. In 2014 it was estimated that there are about nine hundred million mobile subscribers. However, only ten percent of the users are accessing social media on their phone (Srivastava 11 July 2014). A large section of rural India are not using smartphones, but platforms such as CG Net Swara⁷ have allowed people to tell their stories and report issues using ordinary cell phones (CGNet Swara n.d.). This is extremely important as often the mainstream media does not report on issues faced by rural people or people belonging to more deprived states like Chattisgarh (a state in Eastern India) where the CG Net Swara platform has been active. According to a participant, 'it is a very valid kind of activism. We don't actually have any sense of what is going on there, except when x number of government officials are attacked or killed or something like that' (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

One of the participants, in discussing the changes post-Nirbhaya commented that 'after Nirbhaya, women's safety became the next sexy thing in development' (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype). Another development post-Nirbhaya, was that organisations across India developed safety maps and safety mobile applications. A lot of effort was also made by data collecting organisations and non-profits to try and create a map of different cities in India. The primary aim of these mapping projects were to inform commuters, which areas to avoid and then coordinate with the police in order to increase security in such areas. A participant, who runs an organisation called Social Cops and has worked on these safe maps said that while the information for these maps were mainly crowd sourced, some organisations also devised algorithms to crawl the internet to acquire information about assaults in areas from verifiable sources like the newspapers (Sankar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Online campaigning platforms also gained huge popularity. Safety maps like safecity.in were launched on December 26, 2012, days after the Nirbhaya case. They encouraged people to share with them personal stories of sexual harassment and abuse in the public sphere. Once received, the data was aggregated as hot spots showing trends of sexual

⁷ CG Net Swara is an Indian voice-based online portal that allows people from the Central Gondwana region of India to report local news by making a phone call. This portal is freely accessible via mobile phones and allows anyone to report stories and listen to them by giving a missed call. Reported stories are moderated by journalists and become available for playback online as well as over the phone.

harassments on a local level. Through their website, this data was made available to individuals, local communities and administrations, encouraging social and systemic change for safer cities (Safecity 2012). To a certain extent these maps emulated the harass maps that were launched in Egypt in 2010. However, as a participant states, they have not gained as much popularity in India as in Egypt (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

Some of the participants interviewed for this research have been associated with organisations that have developed these safe maps. In this context, a participant spoke about the difficulties inherent in the process of crowdsourcing. A large number of organisations do not have the resources or the technical ability to devise algorithms to crawl the Internet for information and solely depend of crowdsourced information. However, in a lot of the cases, people are not motivated to report cases that do not have personal significance. She said, ‘if you are supposed to do some online reporting for some faceless person, it’s not that people hurry up and do it. They do it when they are told to or if they are a part of a discussion group or something’ (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). This poses a potential difficulty in acquiring information that is essential to keep these maps functional and to make sure that they serve their purpose.

Apps like ‘VithYou’, designed as a ‘panic button’, also gained a lot of attention. Even though these apps gained popularity momentarily, they have not proved to be immensely useful. Most people interviewed did not feel positively about the apps, as they did not provide any solutions to prevent sexual violence and harassment in the long run. A participant in her interview was extremely critical of the apps said that the apps failed to protect people from danger. The apps that served as a panic button would notify some selected people about the imminent danger. She said, ‘the app will send message to your mothers or husbands phone but god knows they might be miles away while you are in this unsafe place. So what will the app do? The apps are all useless’ (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

While ICTs and social media have provided women with various opportunities, it has also allowed perpetrators to use the same technology for further abuse. A few months after the Nirbhaya case, another gang rape was reported in Mumbai where a photojournalist was raped and her male colleague was beaten up. In this case the offenders took photographs of the victim and threatened to leak them if she reported the crime (George 23 August 2013). In this case technology was actually used as a silencing mechanism. Even though the victim still reported the crime, in many other cases the victims are silenced with the fear of shaming themselves and their families. A participant states, 'sexual violence is now becoming sexual violence plus plus. First there is rape and then on top of that it is being filmed and on top of that the victim is being told that we are going to use this to ensure you are silent' (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

On the other hand some women are using the same mechanism to counter gender abuse. Activist Sunitha Krishnan started the 'shame the rapists' campaign after she received a video on Whatsapp (an instant messaging application) that showed six men taking turns to rape a woman. She blurred the face of the victim and shared the video on Twitter and Facebook urging people to identify the perpetrators. Later she removed the video but uploaded screenshots showing the faces of the perpetrators. With the help of these screenshots, one of the perpetrators was arrested in March 2014. Since then Sunitha Krishnan has received ninety more videos of rape, submitted mainly by the victims who till then had remained silent in fear of harassment and social stigma (Firstpost India 23 April 2015).

In her 1970 essay Hanisch used the term 'personal is political' to justify the significance of personal experiences of women and to establish the relationship between personal experiences and larger societal and political structures. Hanisch (1970) describes her experiences of attending women's meetings where women were encouraged to share their stories. This was during the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s. She states that one of the first things that they realised as a group was that 'personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time. There are only collective action for collective solutions' (Hanisch 1970: 77). Further she emphasises the importance of raising awareness in order to inform women and also

to understand the different layers of oppression that exists in society. McCann & Kim (2013) agree with the view and say that in their group the experiences shared by women were both cultural and political. Further to this, they state that this concept is important because many of the issues that have been pushed to the private sphere are deeply political and at the same time, many personal issues require personal commitment. Thus they say that not only is the personal political but the political can also be personal (McCann & Kim 2013). In talking about this Weissman (2007) state that, 'it is no longer sufficient to speak of private life (the household) as separate from public spaces (the workplace). Nor is it enough to speak of patriarchy as separate from the material conditions of daily life' (Weissman 2007: 388).

The most important change since the Nirbhaya case has been the increase in conversations and the raising of awareness. Prior to the Nirbhaya case a lot of conversations were limited to the same community or groups of people. However, post-Nirbhaya a lot of new people joined the conversation. One of the participants stated, 'people now are more inquisitive, people are asking questions and there is a conversation happening. It's not a one-sided, you are wrong and I am right kind of conversation' (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype). The personal narratives about how women from different spheres of life have struggled through the system of oppression in the superstructure of patriarchy started conversations and encouraged and inspired other women. Also post-Nirbhaya a range of complex issues related to gender were discussed in the public sphere, issues that are seen as core issues related to feminism. A participant states that, 'we see a lot of different stake holders participating in it, lot of different opinions coming in. A complexity of issues is being talked about, which is a very happy thing to notice' (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

However, the nature of the conversation, both online and offline, in some cases, has been heavily critiqued. Post-Nirbhaya, a huge section of people online claimed to be feminists and started supporting and talking about feminist ideas. However, many among them either were not aware of the true principles of feminism or were influenced by peer pressure. Flowcharts like the one below were shared on social media to help

people know more about feminism and to determine if they can at all call themselves a feminist.

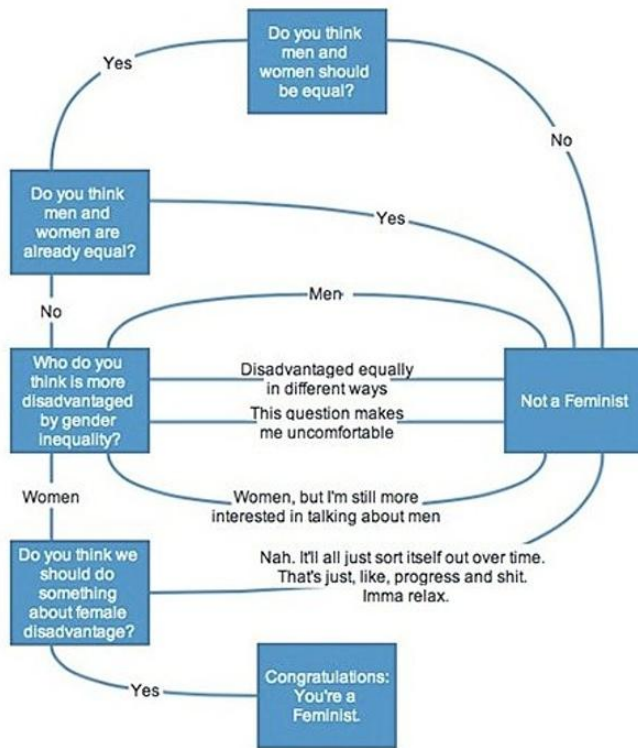


Figure 5: Test for feminism

O'Toole 9 January 2014

Source: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/09/not-a-feminist-move-on-men-women>

A huge number of individuals without the knowledge about core gender issues, in many cases, compromised the nature and quality of the conversation. For example a lot of the discourse had been concerned with protection, security and how men need to ‘man-up’ and protect their women (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). These conversations and ideas are harmful as they were not addressing gender issues but helping in strengthening concepts of patriarchy. Another trend after the Nirbhaya case has been viral videos about gender. While many of the videos have been extremely well made and educating, some others have been confusing giving out wrong ideas. For example a video released in 2015 was titled ‘If dowry is banned, should alimony be banned too?’ Many have raised the important question around whether these two issues

can be compared while others have actually supported this idea (Das 28 April 2015). Some of these videos can actually be counterproductive and give rise to ideas, which can be harmful to the ideas of equality (Sadani, 29 October 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). As a participant said, ‘everybody now ‘knows’, regardless of what that knowledge means and regardless of consequences’ (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

This was not only with individuals; corporations also embraced this discourse of protection. Soon after the case, Gillette (a brand of men’s razors) started an online campaign in India called ‘Soldiers for Women’. It stated that the country required more men who could stand up for women and asked for men across the country to send them pledges. In about 5 months Gillette received 12 million pledges (The Times of India 2013). Gillette, in order to promote the campaign, said that, ‘if you stand for women then you stand for your country. A message that is true and the need of the hour’ (Naidu 26 February 2013). The campaign was conceptualised by BBDO India with the bold statement of ‘Soldiers Wanted’. The video for the campaign was uploaded on YouTube and since then received 3,448,829 views. The Facebook page for the product had more than 1.6 million fans and the campaign was heavily promoted on the page (Naidu 26 February 2013). A large number of participants interviewed for this research were very critical of this campaign and one participant said that people must be very careful about online conversations like this one as it can be very harmful (Sadani, 29 October 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

5.3 The Continuation of the Movement and Participation of Indian Immigrants in the Gender Movement in India

Online activism has encouraged the development of new connections and collaborations giving opportunities to Indian immigrants across the globe to participate in the gender activism in India. Mobile phones and social media have helped create a new platform for activism especially for the educated urban middleclass Indians across the globe. A study conducted by the World Bank in 2010 revealed that there are about 10 million International migrants worldwide from India (Mahapatra 16 June 2010). For the

purpose of investigating the transnational aspect of gender activism, all participants I have interviewed have been from the United States of America. This is primarily because some of the transnational movements that I followed for this research originated specifically in the USA.

There are several reasons why large numbers of Indians migrate to different countries, which include lack of opportunities, slow economic growth and bureaucracy. However, according to Adams & Ghose (2003), the structural, ethnic and gender barriers can have great impact of the advancement of the individual. 'Success is not unattainable in India if one is male, talented, well-educated, fortunate in one's family background and living in one of the main conurbations, but temporary or permanent relocation to the USA provides faster advancement, particularly if one is female, from a lower caste, or otherwise socially disadvantaged' (Westwood & Phizacklea 2000 cited in Adams & Ghose 2003: 421). Thus the reasons can vary from the migration of the highly skilled labour force to North America and United Kingdom in search of better wages and a better quality of life, to the migration of a low skilled labour force to the Middle East. A huge section of the migrants are also students who visit other countries in search of higher education and then eventually source employment and become residents. Migrants to other countries generally feel separated from their host countries due to the huge time and space divide. However, new ICTs have helped collapse this divide, to a large extent, by facilitating the creation of ties and negating the idea of the place to 'strengthen a sense of ethnic identity, which implies a tie between self and place' (Adams & Ghose 2003: 415).

The activism post-Nirbhaya did not remain stagnant. It inspired several other gender related activism across the country, creating a gender-dominated agenda through public discourse in India. The Indian gender movement has been, in many cases, issue based. Thus when the issues were addressed the movement ended (Gandhi & Shah 1992). The Nirbhaya case was different in this aspect. Even though, to a certain extent, the issues behind the Nirbhaya case were addressed, the movement kept moving forward. Identities formed and nurtured within the network were often not limited to the movement itself and also had a spill over effect. Polletta and Jasper (2001) point to the importance of cultural impacts for generating collective action and creating movement

identities, which can be carried forward from one movement to another. McAdam (1995) agrees with the importance of culture in the emergence of protest cycles and states that the 'initiator' movements may begin as a response to political opportunity structures but movements that follow are influenced by the cultural effects of the previous movements and not essentially by political opportunity. Snow and Benford (1992) also argue that some movements provide a master frame, which later movements may draw upon. These successful narratives get converted to slogans and symbols of culture, which are replicated by future movements (Zald 1996). The Nirbhaya movement not only opened up public discourse where gender gained a dominating position but also paved the way for other gender moments across the country. Nirbhaya inspired people from India and of Indian origin to think more critically about gender issues and provided them with ideas and narratives required to drive a movement forward.

One such example of activism was the #Hokkolorab campaign in Kolkata. September 20, 2014 saw thousands of people, mostly students, march on the streets of Kolkata, India. They were protesting against the molestation of a female student inside a University campus in Kolkata and the subsequent violent reaction of the government and people in authority towards the students peacefully protesting against the incident. The hashtag #Hokkolorab (let there be noise) became hugely popular and a campaign that started from a University campus spread all over India and even garnered International attention within hours. A hashtag that is actually a regional Bengali word became the symbol of an independent, democratic student's movement across the world. Students from all over India joined hands and walked the streets in solidarity with the students of Kolkata.

In Kolkata the movement was mostly organised through Facebook and the mobile application Whatsapp using the specific hashtag #Hokkolorob. However, what was worth noting about this movement was the immediate international attention it received. Students across the world showed their solidarity for the movement. Pictures were posted from France, Germany and USA demanding justice. A poster from the Marburg, Germany read,

We are some students involved in a group called Free Education Movement Marburg. We heard about the recent developments at Jadavpur University through the International Student Movement (ISM) platform and decided to express our support for the goals of the Hakkolorob movement in Kolkata. We hope that the movement stays strong and will contribute to sustainable social change.

(Choudhary 13 October 2014)

On September 27, 2014 people gathered in Washington Square Park, New York to protest against what happened in Kolkata. It would be impossible to organise a movement of such strength in different parts of the world in such short time without the use of social media. The protest in New York was completely organised through Facebook where an event was created and people were asked to invite their friends and family to the event. Around 40 people came together in New York for the protest. Most of them were young professionals or students. I interviewed an individual who was present in the protest in New York. In talking about the participation structures she commented, 'it was surprising how far people travelled just to participate in the protests. Some people even came from Vermont and Pennsylvania. Most of us did not even belong to the same university where the incident took place. We just came out to protest against something that was wrong' (Participant 9, 20 November 2014, interview with author, Skype).

The political participation of immigrants can be because of 'rational choice or self-identification and for the feeling of belonging in host countries' (Zapata-Barrero et al. 2013). Thus in this case nostalgia and the feeling of belongingness played a huge part in people coming out to protest. Social media has reduced distance and brought the world closer. So Indian immigrants who physically could not be there in India, took to social media to voice their opinion and contribute to the process of change. A participant further explained, 'even though we are far away from home, what happened in the city made us terribly angry. I was student in the same city not very long ago and I wanted to do my part' (Participant 9, 20 November 2014, interview with author, Skype).

However, this protest was not only aimed at Indian immigrants but also aimed at including and involving people from the host to gain momentum for the movement. The posters for the protest were all made in English so that the protestors could explain why they were protesting to the people passing by and even asked them to join in.

The #HokKolorab Movement saw Indian immigrants and students across the world participate in a campaign that originated in India. However, campaigns like emBODYindia originated in the Harvard University campus in USA. As a part of the Harvard US-India initiative emBODYindia, a photo campaign, was started by a few students of Indian origin in the University of Harvard to protest against the objectification of women and women's rights in India. However the main reason behind the start of the campaign was the blatant objectification of an Indian actress by a popular newspaper in India in 2014, which created massive outrage and raised questions about the rights of a woman over her own body. The campaign asked people to send in their photographs holding a message designed to highlight what bothered them most about the culture of objectification, and what changes they would they want to see in the treatment of women in the public domain in India. The campaign aimed at destroying the stereotypes that reinforced the structures that were responsible for gender-based violence in India. It started as a campaign that was aimed at the Indian-community but the message was a global one. On commenting about the impact of the movement, the organisers of the movement said, 'it bothers us that we are at Harvard and can't always make an impact on the ground. I think the fact that the Indian community at Harvard can mobilise to send across this message is a powerful thing' (Arora 27 September 2014).

Due to the global relevance of the project, this campaign received international attention and pictures poured in from across the globe including India. In the words of the organisers of the campaign,

We want to undertake the daunting task of changing how people think. Yes, we need better laws. Yes, we need better security. Those would be effective, but they don't change the roots of the problem – and that is how people think about

a woman in relation to her body. It's the very basic premise of a woman's ownership of herself that we need to accept.

(Borges 8 October 2014)

Thus emBODYindia became a movement that originated in USA because of an incident that took place in India and that aimed create changes in India by attracting global attention towards the cause.

After the success of this movement, the organisers partnered with another organisation called No Country For Women to raise funds for women's charities in India. No Country for Women is another organisation that was started by three undergraduates of Indian origin from Brown University. They believe in changing the problematic attitude towards women in India by developing 'effective long-term solutions that combat the socio-cultural and institutional framework the perpetuate, sanction and pardon rape and rape culture' (No Country For Women 2014). They hold educational workshops in schools and colleges, raise awareness through social media and mass media, encourage the youth to develop long-term and effective solutions and they also fund and promote proposed solutions.

The emBODYindia campaign did not remain constricted to the Harvard Campus. In November 2014, the students of the University of Cornell US-India Initiative (CUII) extended the Harvard initiative and organised a photo shoot on the November 11, 2014 to spread the same messages. Though it was specifically targeted towards Indian students, they encouraged all students to come and participate. In another initiative, students of Indian origin from esteemed Ivy League colleges in USA showed their solidarity towards victims of sexual assault in India by wearing a red tape on their graduation caps during the convocations ceremonies in June 2014. It was started by an American-Indian in Columbia University, which then spread to other Ivy League colleges including Brown and Harvard. Later students from all these universities also participated in a peaceful protest marches (Singh 5 June 2014). They said,

Respect for a woman's dignity is respect for humanity. And that respect starts at home, spreads through communities, and extends across university campuses to nations around the world. An assault on one woman is an attack on the entire human race...As a student of this great university; I felt it was my responsibility to stand up for the basic rights of others.

(Singh 5 June 2014)

Many of the above mentioned campaigns may seem like isolated movements but social media has helped tie all of them together to form a global gender movement in India that is fighting for change. In relation to the establishment of communication between USA and India, Adams & Ghose (2003) talk about the concept of the Bridgespace. Bridgespace can be defined as, 'a collection of interconnected virtual places that support people's movement between two regions or countries and the sustenance of cultural ties at a distance. It is a space built in and through the Internet and the construction of a space between other media' (Adams & Ghose 2003: 419-410). This space is made up both Indian residents and non-resident Indians (NRIs) leading to a regular exchange of information and cultural values.

The various sites that form a part of this Indo-US bridgespace range from online news portals to online shopping sites for Indian commodities, from sites dedicated from particular ethnic communities living in various parts of North America to matrimonial sites, from sites dedicated for popular culture to online remittance. These sites also give us a notion about specific characteristics and values about Indian culture including strong family ties, strong feeling of nostalgia and frequent return visits. This virtual space is like a bridge that acts as a two-way channel allowing the diffusion from USA to India and allowing the migrants to keep in touch with Indian ethnic and sub-ethnic cultures. Thus, this space allows active engagement through contribution, borrowing and consumption (Adams & Ghose 2003).

In the context of the bridgespace Adams & Ghose (2003) emphasise using the term 'space' as opposed to 'place' since it is more abstract and it enables certain kinds of

movement including goods, ideas and capitals across the cultural and geographical divide between USA and India. According to Michael De Certeau, 'a place is the order in accord with, which elements are distributed in relationship with co-existence.' (De Certeau 1988: 117). So a place is fixed, stable and singular, and always has a distinctive position. A space, on the other hand, is omnipresent and infinite and therefore is defined by how one utilises it. A space is more abstract than a place. What begins as undefined space becomes a place as we get to know it better and endow it with a value (Yi-Fu-Tuan 1977, see Wilken: n.d.). With the advent of ICTs, no longer are we constrained to the fixed area or a certain position. The use of networked mobility has significantly contributed to the dissolving of boundaries leading to the death of geography (Morley 2003, see Wilken: n.d.).

Adams & Ghose (2003) argue about the sense of separation created by the time and place in an online community, which contract the ideal of a community and how technology has helped in collapsing this time and place divide making the online communities closer to the idea of an actual community. Thus, when asked why dissidents from the diaspora felt the need to mobilise online and then come out on the street to protest irrespective of being so far away from their country, one of the participants said, 'distance is far, words are closer and together we are in solidarity. The sound of protest shall travel. Social media has given us this power. Now our fellow protestors in Kolkata know that they have our support. This will only make their movement stronger (Participant 23, interview with author, 20th November 2014).

In the physical world, communities are formed by a group of people who are bound together by some common identity or common intent. Similarly online communities too are formed of people who share a common identity or interests coming together for a shared purpose. Bowler (2010) argues that, 'this shared interest or intent offers a strong forum for members of the community to build relationships and affiliations out of, which they can learn from one another and make an impact on the society or culture around them (Bowler 2010: 2). So even though Indians in the diaspora are physically absent from the country, they have found a space in the virtual world, a community of people with shared ideologies through, which they can make a difference. In this context the members of the Cornell USA-India Initiative said, 'as Indians, we are all

very concerned about what happens back in India. Even though we are not residing there during the academic year, we are still very willing to contribute in making a difference in our country and to promote equality between men and women' (CUII, 22 November 2014, interview with author, Skype).

Patriarchy is universal and gender discrimination is a global issue, which affects different people in different ways. Countries across the globe face different problems related to patriarchy. In this context one of the participants comments,

Everyone is battling their own issues, whether it is difference in wage or abortion issues. So US may not have a dowry problem but it has an abortion problem. So at different levels, there are different concerns, there are different economic concerns, there are different social concerns. But at the root of all this is gender discrimination and inequality.

(Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi)

In some cases this manifests in the form of violence. In talking about gender discrimination, one of the participants said that just because they were currently living in the USA they do not quite experience the intensity of discrimination that women go through in India. However, even in the USA often women earn 75% of what their male counterparts earn even though they are regarded as highly intelligent (CUII, 22 November 2014, interview with author, Skype).

Cammaerts (2005) argues that the use of ICTs within social movements is situated within a complex political context. ICTs have been used by Indian immigrants for three main purposes, firstly to interact and organise, secondly to foster mobilisation when ICTs are used to lobby for social change through online and offline direct actions and finally to raise debates and discussions in order to strengthen the public sphere. It is also important to note that, in examples discussed in this chapter, the Internet and ICTs have not only been used to facilitate virtual debates and conversations but have helped in facilitating on-ground mobilisation, face-to-face communication and co-ordinated action

(See Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework). In this context Cammaerts (2005) states that the use of the Internet in transnational social movements has helped, 'to organise internationally, to build global or regional coalitions with like-minded organisations, to mobilise beyond their own constituencies, to spread information on a global scale independently and thereby support the development of global or transnational public spheres' (Cammaerts 2005: 57).

Crowdfunding has been a significant method for collection of resources required for the development of gender projects in India. Resources like crowdfunding are resulting in new ideas and new projects. 'Make Love Not Scars' is website that is attempting to build a support group for acid attacks victims in India. Most of the members of this organisation are currently Indian immigrants. However, their work has helped create a difference in the lives of many victims in India. Acid attack victims in India receive a meagre sum of money from the government that is vastly insufficient for their treatment, recovery and rehabilitation process. So now, with the help of a crowd funding page on the website Indiegogo set up by 'Make Love Not Scars', victims are relying on donations from strangers across the world for their treatment.

One of the most important aspects of transnational social movements is the ability for activists on a regional and local level to be able to identify with social movements and ideologies on a global level where 'actions, images, discourses, and tactics flow from one continent to another via worldwide communication networks in real time' (Juris 2004: 345). However, some of the participants have commented on transnational social movements leading to decontextualisation of the local discourses. They spoke about how in some instances global voices dominate over the local voices. India as a country is varied and diverse in terms of society, economics and politics and in many cases global voices are unable to understand these complex intersectionalities leading to a dilution of the core conversation specific to the nation or region. A participant states,

Our situation is different and our politics is somewhat different. And so we can't be sometimes forced to take a political stand. The conversation happening with

people from so many different backgrounds, and so many different experiences you are getting a very wide range of opinion. Sometimes the conversation gets changed. What you are discussing itself mutates. It is a little floating. It's a little different from how it would be if you were in say a community meeting, in a specific location, in a specific city. There's no specific context. It's a little bit decontextual, like its floating all over the place. And I do think you can have some of the sort of global north and global south kind of markers coming into these types of conversations as well.

(Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype)

5.4 Changing Nature of Activism

The participation and involvement of 'the individual' in gender activism has resulted in a wide range of ideas, thoughts and opinions in the activist space (see Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework). According to a participant, to engage with and involve these individuals, 'you have to relearn activism in that sense' (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). Another participant states that fifteen years ago if a woman read about a horrifying case of the sexual violence in the newspaper, there would be nothing much that she could do about it. She could write a letter to the editor but she would not know how to organise a protest or have information about where other protests were being organised. However, now with the ICTs, there is a fundamental shift from activists leading the discourse or the activism carried out by non-profits to represent others, to individuals carrying out their activism on their own terms (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype).

Many NGOs and women's organisations are struggling to find their voice in a world that is part online and part offline and it forms a huge challenge. Previously, key organisations would be involved in mobilisation and taking the movement forward. However, now the process has become more decentralised. As in the Nirbhaya case, no one non-profit or women's organisation could be identified to lead the movement.

Women's organisations did play a key role giving recommendations to the Verma commission about the amendments in the law (see Chapter 4: Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework), which were based on multiple years of experience on working with such issues, conducting research and collecting evidence. However, with the sudden exponential rise of online activism, many NGOs are struggling conceptually to find their role in the activist space. The question that they are struggling with is that if NGOs and women's organisations are not leading the movement, are they becoming just another voice? If so, what does that mean and how do they need to redefine their activism? Thus as a participant states, 'now non-profits need to ask themselves, what is the role that we play that individuals cannot play? And what additional things are we bringing into the movement' (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

Many of the participants I interviewed, while talking about the use of social media and ICTs by women's organisations and NGOs, said that many of these organisations, especially the ones who have been in the space for a long time, struggle to use technology. A participant, who I interviewed for this research, specifically works with women's organisations to show them the ways in which technology can be used for the benefit of the organisation. On talking about this issue she said that a lot of organisations, especially the ones in the women's rights space, are older, pre-digital organisations. These organisations are used to carrying out their activism in the offline space. They know how to lobby newspaper and television channels to gain support but they really struggle to use different technologies and create effective online and social media strategies (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). The offline work is important and still remains relevant. However, the lack of knowledge to use technology effectively alienates them from a whole new demographic that they could engage with and mobilise when required.

In this context, a participant states that the lack of understanding of the space by NGOs and women's organisations limits their ability to fully realise the space. Some organisations have adopted mobile phones and are using text messages for rural development work but when it comes to campaigning against sexual violence, traditional women's organisations have a lot to learn. Most organisations now have

websites and social media profiles but when it comes to driving actual activism with the help of social media and ICTs, women's organisations are still lagging behind (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). Another participant agreed with this view and said, 'organisations who are media focused are the ones doing amazing online activism. Youth led organisations are also doing amazing online activism. But women's organisations are still struggling with it and still exploring and are yet to benefit completely from it. Again I feel the need for more feminist voices in the online space' (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). A lot of the organisations that work in the women's rights sector are deeply rooted in the community. They are using technology in a small way like to inform people about meetings through texts. However, very few organisations have started to explore the opportunity of bringing media tools into the community itself and allow them to produce their own media (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

When talking about the use of technology, one of the participants spoke about intergenerational conflicts within organisations. She said that intergenerational conflicts have happened in the feminist movement across the world and with the advent of technology and use of social media and ICTs the feminist movement in India has witnessed a distinct conflict of ideas. However, social media has also played a big role in democratising the space and allowing different people to have their own voice (Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Social media and ICTs have not only played a huge role in activism but helped organisations improve their internal communication making the space more democratic and strengthening the identification with the movement (Diani 2000). A participant states that previously it would be extremely difficult to coordinate with key members of her organisation, especially when quick decisions would need to be made. Due to the lack of accessibility, many members would be left out from the decision making process. However, social media and ICTs have solved this problem making their organisation more democratic. In their field of work quick decisions need to be made, and now all key members would be notified at the same time on their Whatsapp or

social media groups where they can discuss and come up with quick decisions irrespective not being physically present at the same place (Subramaniam, 25 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). Another participant also said that they have an internal portal that is only available to the members of the organisations and the interns. Since all members work on a voluntary basis, most of them have other jobs and priorities that do not permit them to travel and attend meetings. The online portal is a space where all members can discuss ideas and key issues and still remain engaged with the cause. Key members are also there on Whatsapp facilitating in quick and democratic decision making (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

Garrett (2006) argues that the ICTs have helped create non-hierarchical organisation structures making 'movement-entrepreneur-led activism' more feasible (Garrett 2006: 211). Earl & Schussman (2003) also agree with this view and state that ICTs have helped in giving rise to movement entrepreneurs who have the potential to redefine activism (see Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations'). Some of the organisations that participated in this research said that they are registered as a small business or were not registered at all. They said that they did not want to be a non-profit and reach a situation where they get a grant and would have to focus all their energy in achieving the targets of the grant. A participant states that they wanted to make their project open, free and democratic and let people run it. This would not have been possible if they were registered as an NGO (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). Another participant states that even though they are registered as a non-profit, they like to run their organisation like a business. This ensures that everyone who works there has a stable job and gets paid regular salaries. They said that this makes the activists/employee more dedicated towards their work, gives them an opportunity to be innovative and in the process they can achieve changes quicker (Muir, 2 April 2014, interview with author, Skype),

While all participants interviewed spoke about the importance of using social media and ICTs for gender activism, some of them highlighted the negatives as well. One of the major critiques of social media was the concept of 'hit the like button' or 'share' activism. A large section of the people on social media feels that they are a part of the cause by simply liking the page or sharing links. However, such activism lacks

engagement and future actions. Another critique of using social media was the lack of consolidation of voices online. A participant argues that different organisations are raising their voices for different issues and that is leading to scattering of the energy and dilution of the casue. She said, 'I feel everyone is doing their own project, everyone is raising their voice in different ways. The consolidation of the voices is something that is missing' (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). Earlier, there used to be a lot of coalitions where people from different organisations used to sit down and work towards a common goal. With social media a lot of coalitions are being formed. While many of them are extremely useful, others have failed to make it work. In this context a participant states, 'post Nirbhaya everything spreads like wildfire, whatever you do. But out of the huge number of people, how many people will actually collaborate with you to do something meaningful? This is the contrast between activism in the 1980s and now' (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

While talking about online activism, a participant also criticises the One Billion Rising campaign⁸. She said, 'it is wonderful how you are using social media doing a combination of online and offline campaigning. But somehow something does not click for me and it feels like showbiz rather than actual activism. I am not sure if it can be called activism or a media campaign' (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). She further talks about the accountability of such campaigns and says that in some important questions need to be answered like, 'what is the actual message of the campaign? Who is getting affected by it? Is there any evaluation of the impact? How much money has gone into it and if it is money driven activism? Is it a celebrity driven activism or is it real activism where is touches the core of people who are participating in it?' (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

⁸ One Billion Rising is one of the biggest mass action movements to end violence against women. The campaign was launched on Valentine's Day 2012 and began as a call to action based on the staggering UN statistic that showed that 1 in 3 women on the planet will be beaten or raped during her lifetime. With the world population at 7 billion, this adds up to more than one billion women and girls. The aim of the movement is to rise against violence against women and create a new kind of consciousness where violence will be resisted until it is unthinkable.

Whilst the Internet has provided women's organisations and NGOs with new and innovative ways to work, there is still a need for caution and a reminder that the Internet is not a gender neutral space and lot of the discrimination against women that is witnessed off-line is reflected in the online world (Gurumurthy 2004) (see Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations'). Several women are faced with discriminatory and abusive comments on the photographs and articles on social media sites almost every day, which can be extremely harmful (Subramaniam, 25 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). A participant states that every time women are verbally abused on Twitter or Facebook or images of women (particularly nude images) are circulated online or a rape video is circulated online, policy makers including parents (the participant says that within the family the parents are the policy makers) take a protective stand including restricting their online activities (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). This is very similar to what women face in the real world. In order to be safe and protect themselves women are told what to wear, where to go and what to do. Due to this several women, who can be the defining voices in a campaign, refuse to speak, even in an online environment (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

A participant further talks about a study by the Internet Democracy Project in India, which showed that when girls and women face any form of discrimination online, including verbal abuse or the circulation of violating images, they would be rarely willing to speak to their families about it in fear that their online activities would be severely regulated (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). The Internet is a place that symbolises freedom. However, if the freedom of women and girls were to be restricted online, it would lose the purpose of being a platform of equality. Thus activists and NGOs need to be careful when using the digital space for activism to ensure that the activities and the voices of women in the digital space are not restricted or censored. They also need to be aware that they are not taking a protective stance but rather taking a stand for equality and empowerment.

Another important change that was witnessed post-Nirbhaya was the increased participation of men in gender activism. Historically men have never been excluded from the feminist struggle in India and the earliest examples of gender activism can be

witnessed when men like Raja Rammohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar championed the cause of liberation of Indian women (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Sociopolitical and Media Environment'). Over the years, even though women have largely led the feminist movement, there have been several men who have participated in movement on a regular basis (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). However, most of these men are either activists or NGO workers. What changed after the Nirbhaya case was that individual men from all different walks of life came together to participate in the protest marches.

Connell (2005), emphasises the need to include masculinity in order to fully mainstream gender in the theoretical framework. She states that to achieve gender equality it is important to include men as masculinity does not simply mean talking about men but it also means talking about the position of men in the context of gender relations and gender order. Masculinities are socially constructed and it puts immense pressure on men to adhere to certain social constructed expectations (Morrell 2001). One of the participants states that patriarchy has a crippling effect on men as it burdens them with certain social expectations and forces them to fit into a fixed gender identity and gender roles, which in turn can affect men both psychologically and emotionally (Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). He further goes on to say that,

Men should be involved in the gender movement not because they need to be the saviour but they need to liberate themselves. Because liberation of the two are tied together. So unless the women are liberated, men can't be. An egalitarian and gender just society works for both. Both men and women.... So if you are fighting against a social structure like patriarchy that affects hundred percent of the population, how can you keep fifty percent of the people out of it?

(Kumar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi)

Another participant states that it must be understood that gender is a bigger concept and men must be included because both boys and men are also subjected to stereotyping and violence on different levels (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

Some of the most prominent slogans that emerged after the Nibhaya protests were ‘Don’t teach women not to get raped/what to wear, instead teach men not to rape’ or ‘Don’t tell your daughter not to go out, tell your son to behave properly’ (Basu & Shandilya 10 January 2013). While speaking about the slogans, one of the participants commented that men are already involved and meaningful conversation cannot talk place without including them and addressing their anxieties and their construction of masculinities (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

However, post-Nirbhaya, there have been considerable conversations about the construction of masculinity and the role of men in gender activism. This is true not only in the online space but also on mainstream media. A show titled ‘Satya Meva Jayate’ (truth alone triumphs) frequently spoke to men as a part of their conversation on gender (Sadani, 29 October 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). One of the participants argued, ‘we don’t want to be ghettoised, we don’t want to be given a little sweet part in some conference and told here are the women’s issues and deal with it. This has to be about both sexes’ (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). Another participant states that in order to achieve gender equality there needs to be a shift from just the rights of women to gender equality for everyone’s sake. She emphasises that there has been a change in dialogue after the Nirbhaya case, especially online and that has been a very welcome change (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

The increased discussions on the involvement of men in gender activism have not only been taking place on a national level in India but also on a global level. The issue received global attention when the HeforShe campaign was launched by UN Women in 2014. It was a solidarity campaign aimed at involving men and boys as agents for change in order to achieve gender equality. The campaign was launched in the United Nation’s headquarters in New York by a speech made by popular actress and UN goodwill ambassador Emma Watson. Watson’s speech brought a lot of attention towards the issue but the campaign received mixed responses from feminists in India. One of the participants said that men are getting involved in gender activism because

the ‘UN has suddenly woken up and are pumping a whole lot of money. So a lot of men are suddenly saying that we have always believed that you guys (women) are doing the right thing and rape should not happen. And now that there is all this money, we will also take a cap’ (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

Another participant noted that feminism needs to be both an ideological movement as well as a political movement. To fight for gender equality it is important think politically and involve as many people as possible to support the movement. In commenting about the speech she said,

As far as Emma Watson’s speech was the concerned, I didn’t think it said anything amazing. I didn’t understand the big deal about it frankly. I would never have made that kind of speech and I don’t think anybody who is deeply involved with the feminist movement would ever had made that speech. So somebody had to, because none of us were going to. Right? So in that sense it’s good that she did it because you need to address it intellectually, morally as well as politically. And somebody’s got to do the political end of it.

(Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi)

In talking about the involvement of celebrities another participant said that it sometimes can be useful and it can instantly get the attention of the public. She says, ‘celebrities when they say, people listen more. Ok fine! We will get a get a celebrity to say it. And they might start believing in it’ (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

While all of the participants interviewed agreed that there is a need to involve more men in gender activism in India, most of them specified that the role of men in the process must be carefully selected and regulated. Many of the participants commented that men should not take the role of protectors (which very commonly happens) and they must focus on realising and understanding their privileges and talking to other people about it. Men must also realise that they need to give up some of their privileges in order to

achieve equality (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). In talking about the issue of protection, one of the participants says that the idea of men as protectors is problematic because men can rarely protect women within the family or on the streets. She says, 'where they protect? Nirbhaya herself had a man with her. They cannot protect anyone. They themselves get bashed up. I am sure they are scared now' (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

On another level, many of the participants felt that when men enter the conversation they tend to dominate. One participant shares her experience of attending workshops and conferences where men often monopolise the conversation. Thus when she organises such events where men take place she specifically requests them not to sit in the front row and dominate the conversation as it can be quite intimidating for some women whose voices need to be heard (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). Thus men must give women the space to come forwards and speak freely. She further states that it is very prominent in the rural setting and shares her experience of working with rural women. It is increasingly difficult to get some rural women to speak about their experiences and voice their opinions because they have never been put in the situation and have always been told not to have an opinion. They are usually shy and it takes a lot of time for them to open up but eventually they do. However, when the same meeting is conducted with both men and women from the village where women are asked to voice their opinion, they go completely silent (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

Another participant states that in a rural setting it is essential to involve men because in those spaces women are not the decision makers. Thus, to create change for women, men must be involved and activists must find ways to communicate to men about deconstructing their power and privileges (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype). In both the urban and rural setting, the role of men in gender activism must be that of a supporter and to achieve equality they must not co-opt the space and the conversations. In talking about the role of men in gender activism, a participant states that one of the root causes of feminism is patriarchy and the patriarchal system is perpetuated by men. When men speak to other men about issues related to gender and masculinities that can be much more effective than women speaking to men

(Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). She further says that men's involvement can be useful but when men start talking about women's rights and issues it can be very intimidating to women and women must be in positions of leadership to stop men from taking over the movement.

Another important concern about involving men in gender activism is from a resource point of view. A lot of organisations feel that if men enter the field, the money might shift away from working with women. One of the participants said that,

Donors will now say, 'Okay, you need to work with men in the community'. And we will again go back to a pre-60's type of situation where a lot of community development was carried out like that. People would go to villages' etc. but they would never talk to women, because they assumed that the men represented the government. Or they would never talk to lower caste women because they assumed that women from the upper caste have same interests as someone from a lower caste.

(Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author Skype)

This is important to remember as it might result in further marginalisation of women or certain specific groups of women (see Chapter 6: 'The Intersection of Gender, Caste and Class in the Indian Context').

On talking about the involvement of men, the founder of the first men's organisation in India said that the emergence of the idea that men and boys must also be part of the gender programmes has given rise to the fear that funds would be diverted from organisations that work with women to those that work with men and boys. While such a move would not be desirable because the work with women is far from over, the need to include men cannot be overlooked any further and separate funding must be made available to those organisations as well (Sadani, 29 October 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). According to him, '95% of the funds still go to women's organisations, and that's how it should be. But what groups working with men are

asking for is an increase in the funding and allocating more resources to NGOs working for young men and boys as working with women and working with men on issues of gender inequality cannot be mutually exclusive agendas' (Sadani, 29 October 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

He further argues that donors must realise that several women's organisations also work with men in an informal way because sometimes women themselves demand that their men should be sensitised in order to make their lives at home easier. While the women's movements have been chronically under resourced, it must be remembered that working with women and men together is not an option, rather it is a necessity. According to him, 'investing in men is also a way of ensuring women's empowerment, because a gender sensitive father, brother or spouse will positively impact women's lives. After all, we live in the same family, same community and we are interrelated and inter-dependent' (Sadani, 29 October 2014, interview with author, Mumbai).

While all participants agreed that men must be involved in gender activism, there was a split in opinion when it came to the question that if men can be called feminists. One of the participants who agree that men should be called feminists defended her ideas by stating the example of Shripad Amrit Dange, the founding member of the communist party of India. She says 'Dange was an upper caste Brahmin from a rich landowner family but he committed his life to the workers movement. Hence, people should not say that Dange cannot be called a Communist because he was from an upper class rich family. The same is true for men involved in the feminist movement (Gandhi, 1 November 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). People can be born a certain way, but if ideologically they lean towards something, and devote their time towards it, it must be acknowledged. She further comments,

Ok don't call them feminist but call them something. They are committing to do something for your cause. So if you don't want to call them feminist call them pro-feminist, allies - I don't know, whatever. At least recognize that fact. It is not fair to say, I am sorry men cannot be called feminists, only women can be called feminists. But you are most welcome to come and join the marches.

5.5 Conclusion

Online activism in India is a relatively new area of work and people are still struggling to understand it, develop an infrastructure and means of funding. To overcome this, the online community will have to strategize and partner with a range of feminist allies (Martin & Valenti 2012). ICTs and social media have opened up channels for meaningful and profitable communication and collaborations. It has become an important tool to raise consciousness and has given people a platform for technological innovations in the field of gender. The Internet has resulted in information becoming widely and easily available to a large section of the population. According to Pollock and Sutton (1999: 34), 'where information is power, sometimes someone's personal power, it is more likely to have to be shared'. One of the most important things that happened after the Nirbhaya case was the sharing of personal stories online by individuals from different backgrounds. This resulted in creating a sense of community and generating solidarity that was essential for the gender movement in India to move forward and be sustainable.

Organisations in India also widely started using the Internet to collect data for mapping and policy recommendations. Several organisations developed programmes that can crawl the Internet in order to find data about gender violence and inequality. This data then in turn helped organisations and even governments to take the right decisions in terms of policy implementation and changes (Sankar, 21 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

According to Castells, 'the media are not the holders of power, but they constitute by and large the space where power is decided' (Castells 2007: 5). The diffusion of Internet, mobile communication, digital media, social media, has led to the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication, that include the multimodal exchange of interactive messages from many to many both synchronous and

asynchronous, that connect global and local at a chosen time leading to the formation of a networked society (Karatzogianni 2006). This enables movement activists to gain international attention towards their cause at unprecedented speed even without the support of mainstream media. It also helps movements gain not only local but global attention. In this respect a participant states that, ‘social media and the web have had a great impact on spreading the word about what occurs back in India. Through campaigns, many people have become aware of the difficulties women face in India’ (CUII, 22 November 2014, interview with author, Skype).

In order to keep the momentum of the movement alive, it has to be a collaborative effort by all stakeholders – government, civil society, private sector, media, and the ordinary person on the street. The younger generation have always been considered as the agents of change who are instrumental in organising the protest (Morozov 2009). Social media has given youths across the globe the opportunity to participate in the movement and be a part of change in their way. However, irrespective of the huge possibilities of online activism, many of the participants spoke about the need of physical activism along with online activism for movements to be successful. Online activism should go hand-in-hand with physical activism supporting each other for better results. There is still the need for physical activism on the streets parallel to online activism in order to attain results so that voices online are not lost in the virtual world without creating any real impact. A participant states,

Students in America are working to partner with non-profit organisations to implement social projects to raise awareness about the issue, and empowering women with opportunities. At Cornell, we are beginning to raise funds and then will proceed to provide social entrepreneurship in India to actually make a change.

(CUII, 22 November 2014, interview with author, Skype)

The Indian movement also needs to keep up with the global movement and take advantage of the conversations and campaigns on gender that is happening currently across the world. Migration has never been a one-way process, but rather it is one in

which migrants interact simultaneously in the different spaces in which they live. Most aspects of their lives occur and take place across borders (Levitt and Jaworski, 2007). This globalisation of the gender movement has not only brought increased attention and resources to the movement but also helped in adding pressure to the government and people in authority.

The use of ICTs and social media also changed, to a large extent, the way activism takes place in India and the participation of individuals, especially in the online space, has resulted in a wide range of ideas and opinions. Many NGOs and women's organisations are struggling to find their voice in a world that is part online and part offline and are unable to use the technological resources available to them. The lack of knowledge about technology also alienates them from a whole new demographic who they could engage with and mobilise when required. Most organisations have websites and social media profiles but they are not used effectively to drive the movement forward. The changing nature of activism has promoted several organisations not only to think about how they should conduct their activism but also raised questions about how they should run their organisations. Many organisations have adopted the entrepreneurial model where they run their organisations as a business and not a non-profit in order to ensure employee satisfaction.

Another important change that happened post-Nirbhaya was the involvement of individual men from different sections of society. This gave rise to important questions related to the role of men in gender activism and the nature of masculinities. Working with men and boys in India is still very fragmented and in silos (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype). Patriarchy affects both men and women and in order to achieve gender equality both genders must be involved. All participants interviewed for this research agreed that there was an urgent need to involve men in the conversations about equality but role of men in the movement must be that of supporters. On many occasions, when men are involved, they tend to monopolise the conversation. Hence, care must be taken to see that men do not dominate the space and allow women to come forward and share their ideas.

It is difficult to organise and strategize such a decentralised movement and steps need to be taken in order to establish vital connections and collaborations in order to keep the new age gender movement alive. However, perhaps the most important thing that ICTs and social media have achieved is spreading of awareness and giving rise to valuable conversations on a range of topics such as gender violence and masculinities. The Internet and social media has also been used to generate useful debates and meaningful conversations related to gender. It has given people a chance to express themselves. As one of the participants said, ‘through the Internet many women have found their voice. They can now express themselves much more freely, especially in India. More and more women are coming out of their traditional patriarchal upbringing and breaking the mould’ (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype).

People all over the world are aware of what is happening in India and participating in meaningful dialogue related to different aspects of patriarchy and gender equality. Another participant states that, ‘firstly what needs to change is the way people think. Social media is helping us in the biggest way to do this. We can be a part of change in our own space and time’ (Participant 9, 20 November 2014, interview with author, Skype). These conversations and the awareness raised through them is one of the greatest forces propelling the gender movement in India forward.

In the next chapter: 'The Intersection of Gender, Caste and Class in the Indian Context' I discuss the concept of Intersectionality by analysing the Nirbhaya case to understand the multiple axes of power within a society that results in further marginalisation of certain groups of women. I also talk about intersectionality in the digital space to create a broader understanding of the relation between gender activism and ICTs.

Chapter 6: The Intersection of Gender, Caste and Class in the Indian Context

India is an increasingly diverse society with a wide range of intersecting discriminations that affect women. Class and caste divisions form the foundation of the hierarchical nature of Indian society and in this chapter I discuss how the intersection of class and caste, along with patriarchy, forms a complex web of discrimination and violence for women. India is also significantly multilingual and multicultural leading to vastly different perspectives on gender, inequalities and power relations (Purkayastha et al. 2003). The concept of Intersectionality put forward by Crenshaw (1989) was devised by considering the issues faced by black women in the United States. In this chapter I have applied the same framework in an Indian context in order to understand the nature of violence and discrimination faced by women in India and to explore the intersecting factors of class and caste when looking at gender violence. Using an analysis of the Nirbhaya case through the lens of intersectionality, an understanding of the different factors involved in the case is facilitated, as is the rationale for the production of social media attention and resultant action. Finally this chapter also talks about the nature of modern Indian feminism.

6.1 Caste and Class in India

The caste system in India is a form of social stratification. Historically, Indian society, specifically Hindu society, used to be divided into four main hierarchical categories or castes that were endogamous groups with traditional occupations and a hereditary membership. The four main castes were Brahmins (mainly the priests), Kshatriyas (the rulers and military), Vaishyas (the merchants and traders), and Shudras (the agriculturists) (Blunt 1931). Apart from these four castes there was another caste that was altogether excluded from this system of hierarchical categorisation. They were called untouchables (also known as Dalits) because their occupations were regarded as ritually impure and among others included doing dirty work like cleaning toilets, butchering and removal of rubbish. They were segregated from society and banned from full participation in social life with others belonging to higher castes. Castes however, were not immobile and studies have shown that given time, means, organisation and a

favourable political climate, castes and subcastes have risen in the status hierarchy (Kothari & Maru 1965).

Identity is a social construct and the state, through its powers to dominate discourse, plays a key role in the process of its construction. Many scholars have argued that the modern caste system in India was created by the British colonial regime with the registration of the population by social categories, which was followed by the implementation of policies and laws specific to each category (Dumont 1980; Pruthi 2004; Cohn & Singer 1968). Cohn and Singer (1968) argue that the British administration, policy and law has been instrumental in structuring the class and caste identity in modern India (Cohn & Singer 1968). This concept came to further light in connection with Said's theory of Orientalism. India, like many other parts of the world (especially the East) has a long history of European colonisation and western imperialism. For years western scholars have been intrigued by the idea of eastern culture, way of life, the images and the fantasies, the mysticism of the Oriental. Edward Said in his book called Orientalism (Said 1978, 2003) discusses how the concept of the Orient is not something that is an inert fact of nature but it is something that has been given reality by the West and for the West. He says that Orientalism was in fact a European invention (Said 1978). The Orient is an integral part of the European material civilization and culture and Orientalism is a western way of dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.

In defining orientalism Said states, 'the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilization and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the 'other'..... In addition, the Orient has helped define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience' (Said 1978: 1). Thus we see the emergence of the term 'others' in order to set up a system of hegemony, oppression and separation of the West from the East. It is increasingly important to recognise and accept Orientalism as a discourse in order to understand the systemic discipline by virtue of which European cultures were able to produce and manage the Orient politically, culturally, sociologically, ideologically, scientifically and even imaginatively (Said 1978; Breckenridge & Van der Veer 1993; Yegenoglu 1998).

Orientalism is a style of thought that is based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the 'Orient' and (most of the time) the 'Occident' where the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, domination and varying degrees of complex hegemony (Said 1978; Breckenridge & Van der Veer 1993). However, in the portrayal of the Orient it has been forgotten that the people in these countries have a history, culture, customs and a reality that is their own and it is much greater than anything that is said about them in the West. In talking about this Said further states that the challenge to Orientalism and the colonial era of which it is so organically a part of, was a challenge to the muteness imposed upon the orient as object. In so far as it was a science of incorporation and inclusion by virtue of which the Orient was constituted and then introduced into Europe, Orientalism was a scientific movement whose analogue in the world of empirical politics was the Orient's colonial accumulation and acquisition by Europe. The Orient was therefore not Europe's interlocutor, but its silent 'other' (Said 1985: 93).

Thus Orientalism is far from the reality of the Orient; it is directly dependant on the various western techniques of representation (Lewis 2013). Said (1985) also draws attention to certain questions about representation brought forth by feminists or women's groups, which take for their point of departure the right of 'formerly un- or mis-represented human groups to speak for and represent themselves in domains defined, politically and intellectually, as normally excluding them, usurping their signifying and representing functions, overriding their historical reality' (Said 1985: 91). Since this research is based in India, a country that has a long history of colonisation, it is important to understand the concept of the Orient who have been historically separated or 'othered' by the West and from the West (Anne et al. 2013). This is specifically so that it can be understood how the country and its people are represented to the rest of the world. It has been established that women, even in the West, still suffer from discrimination, inequality and various kinds of abuse (Johnson 1995; Crenshaw 1991).

Indian women, being a part of this 'Oriental' culture are susceptible to more discrimination and abuse compared to white women from the West because of various other forms of discrimination that forms a part of their daily life. However, it is very

difficult to understand the nature and type of discrimination and abuse faced by Indian women as it is such a variable topic. It is important to remember that India not only has a huge urban/rural divide but that there is a divide between different classes, castes, religions and women belonging to each of these different communities face discrimination and inequality of varying nature and degrees.

Ludden (1993) agrees with the concept of Orientalism but he goes further by saying that, 'today Orientalism is most defensive on the ground that people in India and elsewhere believe its imagery to represent the truth about themselves' (Ludden 1993: 270). Ludden argues that people in India having false beliefs about themselves cannot be solely attributed to the British rule, but also to the Indian political leaders who ruled India after Independence. The Orientalist image served the purpose of these leaders and gave them power, as it had done to the British, and using that power the government further reinforced that Orientalist image (Ludden 1993).

In 1951, in a constitutional amendment, a law was passed that allowed certain, weaker sections of the population to be given preferential treatment and permitted the reservation of posts in favour of socially backward classes of citizens. The Socially and Educationally Backward Classes originated as an administrative category. However, it was very difficult to identify who these people were (De Zwart 2000). Caste identity in India follows a segmentary principle and the definition and meaning of caste is relative to context. In the context of local events, castes are small endogamous groups of people with the same name, spread over a few adjacent villages. On a regional level, they are clusters of local castes, perceived by others as groups with similar status and subsumed under one name. In the context of a state or the nation, castes are collections of regional clusters (De Zwart 2000: 3).

In publications from the Indian government, such as the Census of India or the lists used for affirmative action, castes are mostly considered to be regional or state-level caste clusters. But whereas outsiders, as well as the government, treat these clusters as groups with similar status they are still highly stratified for insiders. The subtleties of rank within a caste cluster are often unknown or unrecognised by people outside it (De Zwart

2000:4). The caste system is more prominent in everyday life in rural areas. However, the caste system is most prominent in India in cases of marriage where, in many cases, inter-caste marriages are not allowed by families and this occurs both in urban and rural India. In urban regions many people belonging to traditionally lower castes have integrated with the population by acquiring education and wealth. However, the population in urban area is subdivided in terms of class (upper class, upper middle class, middle class, lower middle class), a distinction mainly made in terms of a person's wealth and social status.

6.2 Intersectionality in the Indian Context

The concept of intersectionality was devised in relation to the experiences of white women and women of colour in the West (Bilge 2010). The concept of intersectionality was put forward by Crenshaw (1989) where she spoke about the experiences of women of colour which were often a result of intersecting patterns of sexism and racism (see Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations'). Even though much of the work on intersectionality was done by scholars from the United States, with specific emphasis on gender and race, this framework can be applied universally to understand the multiple axes of power within a society that results in further marginalisation of certain groups of women. As Bose (2012) argues, the concept of intersectionality has not remained static and this approach has been applied beyond the original foci on race, ethnicity, gender, and class to incorporate citizenship, sexuality, religion, age, and other dimensions of subordination, across many different social and cultural settings

In this research, I have applied the Intersectionality framework in an Indian context to understand the effects of class, caste and geography on gender violence in India. Indian society is multi-layered with the existence of class, caste, urban and rural divides, and the inequality and abuse faced by women varies due to the intersection of two or more of these categories. According to concepts of Orientalism, Indian women (as a group) are marginalised as compared to white women in the West. Thus even within the group of 'othered' women there exists a hierarchy where some women have certain

advantages (based on caste, class and geography) while some are again ‘othered’ and face varying degrees of abuse and marginalisation (Anne et al. 2013).

Racism and patriarchy have played a vital role in shaping conceptualisations around gender violence in India. India has a long history of rape by authority and custodial rape where landlords, police and other men in positions of authority have raped women (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Sociopolitical and Media Environment'). The cases of Rameezabee, Maya Tyagi, Mathura and Bhanwari Devi (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Sociopolitical and Media Environment') were all cases of rape that got considerable attention both from the public, as well as feminist groups across India. The common link between all these cases was the factor of power and authority related to the positions of the perpetrators. In three out of the four cases the victims were low caste, low class women and in all the above cases the perpetrators belonged to a higher class in terms of power and authority. In this context a participant comments, ‘there are certain forms of violence which are manifested in a caste context. Sexual violence in rural spaces where caste and class are a very strong factor, there's a sense of sexual entitlement among men of upper class. And so perhaps because of that sexual entitlement rape is not even seen as a crime’ (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

Even though caste and class are recognised forms of discrimination in Indian society, people often fail to recognise the importance of both these factors while addressing issues related to gender violence. In this context a participant points out that in the Mathura case (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Sociopolitical and Media Environment'), there was very little attention being paid to the fact that it was also class and caste violence. The kind of intersectionality of gender and class identity in the case was not something that was paid a lot of attention to by the feminists of that era (Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Anne et al. (2013) argue that caste and gender are the two major forms of discrimination in Indian society and people simultaneously belonging to both these minority groups suffer the most discrimination. Orchard (2004) supports this view and states that women from lower castes, especially Dalit women, are regularly raped by men belonging to upper castes in order to reinforce their power and authority. She further argues that in many villages lower caste women are forced to have intercourse with high caste men to settle debts and disputes (Orchard 2004). However, in the same village women belonging to the upper caste do not face the same level of violence. Men belonging to the same lower caste also do not face similar discriminations as women who belong to the same low caste. Hence people belonging in the intersection of gender and caste are the primary victims of violence and discrimination (Anne et al. 2013). In this context a participant comments,

In general, poorer women and lower caste women are more vulnerable. There's no doubt about it, because they don't have the protection of their families. Their families cannot get in touch with the police, they cannot pull some strings, and so there's no doubt that they are more likely to be victims. But in terms of perpetrators, it could be practically be anyone. But the lower caste, lower class man attacking an upper caste, upper class women, would be rare.

(Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi)

Crenshaw (1989) also discusses the nature of punishment, when black men faced harsher and longer punishments compared to white men and the punishment was most severe when the crime was committed against a white woman by a black man. A similar situation can be witnessed in this Indian context. Ex-president of India Dr A.P.J Abdul Kalam, in his book *Turning Points: A Journey Through Challenges*, wrote that a study conducted during his term as president showed that all pending cases of capital punishment displayed a socioeconomic bias (Bhowmick 10 July 2015; Chhibber 29 July 2015). In 1980, a verdict by the Chief Justice of India P. N. Bhagwati further supports the claim made by Dr. Kalam. He said, 'there can be no doubt that death penalty in its actual operation is discriminatory, for it strikes mostly against the poor and deprived sections of the community and the rich and the affluent usually escape from its clutches' (Menon 21 August 2004).

In order to further analyse this, in the table below I have summarised some of the rape case from 1990 till 2012 that resulted in public outrage. All cases mentioned in the table are women whose stories were reiterated by the media and even compared with the story of Nirbhaya after the Nirbhaya rape case. These cases were listed after collecting data from online sources following the Netnographic approach in the first phase of data collection. There is no ethical issues in revealing the names of the victims as these were the names used by the media to refer to these particular cases. One of the participants on talking about the naming the victim felt that the media and political leaders are less particular about details such as naming the victim when the victim is low caste, low class. He states, ‘it is as if they don’t even deserve a pseudonym’ (Sadani, 29th October 2014, interview with author, Mumbai). This theory however does not hold ground in case of the Hetal Parek whose real names was used even though the victim belonged to the affluent middle class. Only two cases in the table below where pseudonyms have been used are the Suryanelli rape case and the Nirbhaya case.

Table 4: Summary of High Profile Rape Case from 1990 till 2012

Victim	Year	Nature of Crime	Perpetrator	Place	Punishment
Hetal Parekh, belonged to the affluent middle class	1990	Victim was raped and killed	Dhananjay Chatterjee, a poor guard in the apartment building of the victim. He belonged to high caste but socially belonged to a low class.	Kolkata	Chatterjee was hanged in 2004. New analysis revealed in 2015 claimed that the perpetrator might have been innocent and punished for a crime he did not commit (Jayaram 21 July 2015).
Bhanwari Devi , belong to low class poor family and low Dalit caste	1992	Victim was gang-raped by 5 men	Ram Karan, Ram Sukh, Gyarsa, Badri and Shraavan Sharma. All belonged to the high caste, high class Gurjar community	Bhateri, Rajasthan	Five men were acquitted (Halabol 20 May 2013).

Suryanelli Rape case, victim belonged to poor low class family	1996	Victim was abducted and raped over a period of 40 days by different men	40 people were accused including some very influential, well known individuals like an MP called P.J. Kurien. Main accused was a well-connected lawyer called Dharmarajan.	Kerala, Tamil Nadu	In 2005 all except one accused was acquitted. However, after the Nirbhaya incident, the case was reassessed by the Supreme Court and 24 men were convicted. The prime accused Dharmarajan, was given life imprisonment (Krishnakumar 8 March 2013).
Priyadarshini Mattoo belonged to a middle class family	1996	Victim was raped and killed	Santosh Kumar Singh, the son of a high class Police Inspector-General	New Delhi	Accused was first acquitted and then given life imprisonment by the Supreme Court in 2010. He was given one month's parole in 2014 to submit his dissertation (The Times of India 25 February 2014).
Manorama Thangjam Chanu	2004	Victim was gang-raped and killed	Indian paramilitary unit 17 Assam Rifles were said to be responsible	Assam	Nobody was accused. The main report of the incident was kept under wraps till 2014 when finally it was released to the Supreme Court which revealed the victim had undergone 'brutal and merciless torture' (Rajagopal 14 November 2014).

Nirbhaya, belonged to a middle class family	2012	Victim was gang-raped. Died later in the hospital	Ram Singh, Mukesh Singh, Vinay Sharma, Pawan Gupta, Akshay Thakur and Bhura (the juvenile), all socially belonged socially to a low class	New Delhi	Ram Sigh committed suicide in the jail. The remaining four were given the death sentence. The juvenile was given three years in a reformation home by the juvenile justice board
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The above table shows that only in two cases the death penalty was awarded to the accused and in both cases the perpetrators were socially and economically backward. Firstly, in the 1990 Hetal Parekh case, the accused Dhananjay Chatterjee, who was a poor guard in the apartment building where the victim lived, was hanged in 2004. Secondly, in the Nirbhaya case all five accused who were poor slum dwellers, were given the death sentence. In both these cases the victims represented the educated middle class and the perpetrators were from a lower marginalised class. In all other cases, the victims were either middle class or low class but the perpetrators belonged to a higher class and were socially and economically more influential compared to the victim. None of the accused in these cases was given the death sentence. Some of them were even acquitted and the maximum punishment given was life imprisonment.

Crenshaw, (1989) argues that the experiences of domestic violence, rape and remedial reform of women located at the intersection of race and gender is also very different (see Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations'). Women from rural areas of India are more susceptible to violence compared to educated women from urban areas. Women belonging to lower caste also face more abuse compared to women of higher castes (Anne et al. 2013). Again, urban women who are being abused are less likely to react when they are completely dependent on their husbands (International Clinical Epidemiologists Network 2000).

It is also important to recognise that the type and nature of violence faced by women might also differ according to class, caste and geography. Whilst majority of women share the prevalent understanding of male domination and patriarchy, their reactions differ according to the intensity of the beating and their class origins (Koenig et al. 2006). In this context Gandhi & Shah (1992) states that ‘working class or peasant women were more used to occasional slapping, kicking or thrashing and did not vehemently opposed to it... On the other, middle class women are shocked and become numb with terror’ (Gandhi & Shah 1992: 63). Middle class women’s reaction to domestic violence is often self-blaming. They are made to feel that it is not the man’s problem but their failure as a wife that leads to such violence. The humiliation of getting beaten often silences these victims. In a survey report conducted by the International Clinical Epidemiologists Network about domestic violence in India, it was discovered that a significantly lower number of urban women reported any forms of abuse, physical or psychological. The reporting was highest among rural women followed by women living in urban slums (International Clinical Epidemiologists Network 2000). In this context a participant comments, ‘people in slums or maid servants talk more easily about the violence that is inflicted on them because they do not have the notions of privacy that the middle class people do’ (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

In India, domestic violence and abuse is not only a rural phenomenon but also an urban one (Martin et al. 1999). However, the nature and extent of the problem varies depending on the nature of society. According to a UNIFEM report, ‘one in three women around the world will be raped, beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime’ (UNIFEM 2003). In talking about this report one participant stated, ‘violence is as much an urban phenomenon as it is rural. One in three women is abused in her lifetime. Now imagine you are sitting in a room with your mother, grandmother and sister and one out of the four women in the room has been abused in some way’ (Jagannathan, 7 March 2014, interview with author, London).

According to Gandhi and Shah (1992), the family as an institution has not been sufficiently analysed as a site of patriarchal dominance and oppression. Patriarchy, unlike its earlier usage as a father right, is now understood more as a ‘distinct system of control men have over women’s labour, fertility, sexuality and mobility in the family, workplace and society in general’ (Gandhi & Shah 1992: 89). Patriarchy is a system that operates on both the ideological and material levels and interacts with the relation of production and transforms itself according to benefit both men and the capitalist system. It reproduces itself in various different ways, through different relations and institution to maintain a systemic inequality between the sexes.

In some communities, domestic violence is regularised and acceptable as a way of life. Hence, it is often the case that domestic violence as a crime is not taken seriously (Kaur & Garg 2008). If the victim is a lower caste rural woman or a woman from any ‘othered’ communities, they receive very little media attention or attention from support groups and women’s organisations and this often results in the victims being silenced or forgotten (Dominguez 30 May 2014). Only the most severely beaten women would consider their problem worthy of mentioning in interviews or surveys. The others accept forms of beating and abuse as commonplace and do not even consider reporting them (International Clinical Epidemiologists Network 2000). This normalisation of gender based violence is also not limited to rural women. A participant, who teaches in an elite New Delhi college, comments,

There’s a massive crisis about gender unfolding every single day. I think young men and women have lost their bearings in terms of what is acceptable behaviour. Women are as confused about it as men are. Women internalise so much, that it appears normal to them when there are small forms of attack. It appears normal to them to tolerate a certain amount of control and violence in a relationship. As somebody who teaches in a relatively elite women’s college, I’m amazed at the kind of routinisation of gender hierarchies among the students.

(Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi)

Rape is one of the ultimate forms of violent expression of both class and patriarchal oppression (Hanmer & Maynard 1987). Violence is used to keep an oppressed group under terror. The representation of rape in the eyes of law has also been a patriarchal process, where the women are under constant scrutiny and questioned about their chastity and purity. Gender based stereotypes about clothes, attitude, past relationships all become reasons for female oppression as it often suggests that she was not a victim of rape, but asking for sex (Naqvi 5 March 2015). Therefore, it is often considered that the victim brought sex on herself by breaking social norms that are only applicable for women. Women in lower caste tribal or rural areas have been the most common victims of custodial rape (see Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Socio-Political and Media Environment'), thus establishing a belief that it is people belonging to higher and more powerful castes or authoritative positions that exploit their positions and take advantage of the women who are lower to them socially and economically. In the urban areas it is the capitalists or men in higher management positions who are involved in forms of custodial violence. Thus, violence is therefore basically a class issue for them (Gandhi & Shah 1992).

It is also important to consider the problems faced by women who migrate to urban areas in search of jobs. It has been acknowledged that migration is a highly gendered issue (Danziger 2012). Women, who migrate from rural areas, live in urban areas but their experiences are very different from other women from the urban, educated, high class or middle class backgrounds. A large section of women migrants are ones who accompany male migrants but now the number of single women migrants has gradually increased as well (Mitra 1994). However, single women migrants face a large number of serious problems making them extremely susceptible to abuse (Mitra & Murayama 2008). The experience of rural men in an urban space is also very different. Normally these two groups of people may not have mixed at all. But these groups are now mixing because of the fluidity of the urban space. In an interview a participant further emphasises the existence of a geographical divide and states,

People who come from certain regions are more used to having complete control over a women's mind, body and soul and that is then amplified by popular culture, portrayal of a women as an object as vs. a human being. When these men come to an urban space where women are breaking those norms their reaction to that is often violent because that's what their reaction to rejection is.

(Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype)

The rate of migration has rapidly increased and that has resulted in men and women of many different backgrounds infiltrating the urban space and they need to undergo huge amounts of social adjustments just to fit into a society and lifestyle that they are not used to (Mitra & Murayama 2008). A participant states that, 'a very different breed of men and women are entering the urban spaces. The social adjustment with the widening income gap, put it together with moneyed but uneducated people into urban spaces, you put all of this together and you are asking for trouble' (Participant 5, 11 July 2014, interview with author, Skype Interview)

6.3 Intersectionality of Gender and Class in the Nirbhaya Case

A number of factors were responsible for the massive outrage after the Nirbhaya case. However, the role played by the intersectionality of class and geography has not been highlighted to a great extent. What was different in this case was that men belonging to a much lower class raped an educated middle class girl. There is sexual hierarchy where some female bodies are placed over others and in this case the dynamics were reversed. In this context Kabeer (5 March 2015) states the Nirbhaya case has brought out, in front of the world, the effect of the widening inequality in a modernising and globalising economy. She says, 'this was violence perpetrated by men from the underclass of Delhi, men who will never share in the benefits of 'shining' India, against a woman who symbolised the country that India hopes to become' (Kabeer 5 March 2015). Many of participants interviewed agreed with this view. One of them commented,

I think the profile of not just the victim in that case but also the circumstances that fit those slots very well. She was one of us, doing something that any of us could have been doing. On the other hand the attackers were the kind that people middle class, urban Indians have no problem in speaking out against. So I think a lot of caste and class factors did come together in that as well.

(Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi)

When looking at new social movements, an extensive participation by the middle class can be observed (see Chapter: 2 ‘The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations’). This middle class ‘participation revolution’ was rooted in deep post-materialist values, emphasising direct participation and a moral concern toward the plight of others. It is often said that new social movements are the movements of the educated middle class or the ‘new middle class’ or of the more educated and privileged sections of generally less privileged groups (Karatzogianni 2006). The Nirbhaya movement saw an extensive participation of Indians coming from the educated middle class background and Nirbhaya became the symbol of the quintessential Indian middle class daughter.

Every participant interviewed for this research was asked to state what, according to them, led to the Nirbhaya case escalating into a huge gender movement in India. Only two interviewees (both long time feminist activists) spoke about the brutality of the case or the nature of the crime as a reason for the massive outrage. Another activist commented that she did not understand why the case became so big because India witnesses cases of gender violence every day, some even more violent than the Nirbhaya case. Apart from them, all other participants said that the case gained so much attention because of who the victim was and the circumstances: ‘It could have been me’. Nirbhaya could have been anybody’s daughter, sister or friend. In this context a participant commented, ‘Nirbhaya represented the middle class sensitivity. She could have been anyone’s daughter or sister. It is sad that it often takes something like this happening to someone belonging to the educated middle class to bring these issues into visibility’ (Tarrant, 23 April 2014, interview with author, Skype).

The Nirbhaya case affected the middle class sentiment. She was, perhaps, the ideal victim that could trigger a protest like this (Christie 1986; Gilmartin--Zena 1983). She was educated and belonged to the urban middle class. She was not alone and was accompanied by a male companion who would, under normal circumstances, be expected to protect her. It was not late in the night and the incident occurred in a very popular and populated area in one of the busiest cities in India. Everything about the circumstances of the Nirbhaya case was extraordinarily ordinary. Almost every urban middle class woman could relate to her background and circumstances and if it could happen to her it could happen to anyone. Another striking aspect was that it was a crime where a couple was involved. Women in India are often advised not to travel alone without a male companion for safety and security. However, Nirbhaya was not alone. The fact that it not only happened to a girl but to a couple made it more relatable to the urban young middle class community. A participant states, 'the fact that it happened to a couple and not just to a girl, brought in a lot of young people who are struggling to live life on their own terms' (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Geography also played a huge role the case getting so much attention. The young, urban, middle class Indian population, alongside the political class, journalists, policy makers and opinion makers, are mostly concentrated around Indian cities. Thus, when gender and caste violence occurs in a rural landscape it does not attract the attention of the urban middle class as it does not affect the flow of urban life and is often forgotten. A participant states that when a case of a similar nature happens in an Indian village, people do not react the same way because they think its rural problem. It's far away from home and can never happen to them. But when it happens to someone in a city it suddenly becomes a real problem (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). Another participant states, 'the route that the bus was taking was a very common route. It could have been my route. People related themselves to the situation. It was a very urban situation. It was not disconnected from them, it was not something that they had to think about' (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

The fact that the case happened in Delhi, the capital city of India, also played a huge role. This prompted the media to report the story far more quickly than usual. The Nirbhaya case made gender violence a reality to the people in urban India. It was no longer something that could be ignored by saying it was a rural phenomenon and it was this realisation that motivated people to take action. It happened close to home and to a girl from the middle class background. So people could identify with the victim and what happened to them. The fact that it could happen to anyone hit people really hard. As a participant states, 'it made me feel insecure and vulnerable' (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

Another factor that resulted in the Nirbhaya case becoming one of the biggest gender movements in India was the result of the media attention the case received. Karatzogianni (2006) states the importance of media attention in order to make a social movement successful (see Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations'). According to Patil & Purkayastha (2015) there are some well-perpetuated myths when it comes to the coverage of rape by the mainstream media. In mainstream media there are a core set of assumptions that distinguish 'real rape' or 'ideal rape' from 'not real' rape. In an 'ideal' or 'real' situation 'rape occurs in a non-domestic setting, typically at night, in which the rapist is a monstrous (male) stranger who attacks a (female) victim with a weapon, where the victim's appearance, dress, behaviour are unimpeachable, and where the victim, physically resists and sustains visible injuries' (Patil & Purkayastha 2015: 600). In case of Nirbhaya, she was not only the ideal victim but it was also the 'ideal rape' and therefore it was picked up by the media immediately, given publicity and sparked a mass public outcry.

In order to establish that Nirbhaya was the 'ideal victim' and the rape was an 'ideal rape' for mainstream media, news articles published by one of the biggest news channels in India were looked at. On December 17, 2012 when the Nirbhaya case was reported, there were four articles on the Nirbhaya case. However, on the same day there was one article each on two other rape cases. One of the articles was about the gang rape of a fourteen year old girl in a small village in Kerala, South India. The girl was allegedly raped by her brother and his friend for two years (NDTV 17 December 2012).

The other case was of a six year old girl allegedly being raped by her neighbour in south Delhi (NDTV 17 December 2012). On the December 18, 2012 there were twenty one articles reported on the Nirbhaya case. On the December 19, 2012 there were twenty eight articles that provided a step-by-step update of the Nirbhaya case and then there was one four sentence article reporting on the brutal rape of a five year old child belonging to a village in South India who was battling for her life in the hospital (Manjesh 2012). There were no further updates on any of the other cases except the Nirbhaya case. The same trend was observed over the next few months where rape happening in rural India received very little or no attention from the mainstream media.

Crenshaw (1994) argues that often the sexual conduct of black men has been viewed negatively and historically links have been made between black male sexuality and violence. Just like some female bodies are given more importance than others, a disproportionality has been noticed when it comes to punishment of the perpetrator, especially if they belonged to a minority community (Crenshaw 1994). The same patterns can be noticed in India, where the body of an upper caste, upper class woman is considered to be most important. In this context Kabeer (5 March 2015) talks about the class of the perpetrators being a major factor in the representation of the crime. In talking about the Nirbhaya case there was an emphasis on the socio-economic background of the rapists. All of the perpetrators were low class slum dwellers and the youngest among them lived on the street since the age of 13. They migrated from their villages and lived in slums in New Delhi. Only one of the perpetrators had a school education (BBC 13 September 2013). According to Kabeer, 'they fit the face of the image of the rapist 'monster' in the public imagination in a way that rapists in the police force, the army and the upper castes do not' (Kabeer 5 March 2015).

In her interview, a participant mentioned how the discourse about rape in India has created a perception in a certain way that sexual violence is largely a lower class problem. It is often widely perceived that sexual violence is a 'problem of the migrants, uneducated rural people and people who could not adjust to social progress' (Participant 7, 20 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). Another participant agrees with this view and states that,

If the victim is middle class and propitiator is lower class, the crime is very well addressed. The newspapers are full of stories. So for instance, there was a case in a colony in Delhi, six months ago I think, in which an upper caste, upper class old woman, was raped and murdered by her domestic help and that got a lot of coverage.

(Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi)

However, the participant agrees that a case would not receive the same kind of attention or coverage if the perpetrators were upper class or middle class. Thus, Nirbhaya was not only the ideal victim but the rapists the ideal perpetrators or ‘monsters’ making the Nirbhaya case not only a case of gender activism but a case of class outrage (Kabeer 5 March 2015).

6.4 Intersectionality in the Digital Space

ICTs and social media have become tools that are widely being used for gender activism in India. While in the real world intersecting factors like class, caste, race and geography play a crucial role in defining, separating and understanding the experiences of different women, there are several factors in the digital world that separate the experiences of women. In talking about this, a participant states that, ‘online, caste and class is very difficult to say, to be honest. But the biggest divide is language. So you can say, language is the proxy for class and caste divide in the online world, to some extent’ (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). As India is a multi-lingual country, language is a huge barrier and very little content is available in regional languages. This means that people who do not speak English have very little information available online that they can actually access.

In this context a participant talks about her own experience. Her NGO workes with women from rural and local newspapers and teach them how to use the Internet to access useful information. However, the biggest barrier while working with women in

the online space for them was not the urban rural divide, the rich poor divide or even the class, caste divide. It was the language divide that separated the English speaking individuals from the non-English speaking ones. She said that if ten different people from ten different states of India were made to sit down and nine were given a keyword in their regional language and the last one was given the same keyword in English and they were asked to run a search, the person searching in English would find infinitely more information compared to the people searching in other regional languages (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). This creates an inequality in the access of information where a huge section of the population is left out. In that case, when activists and NGOs are organising online gender campaigns, if they are not translated in regional languages that huge section of non-English speaking population will be left out.

The other barrier is that of access. A lot of rural areas in India do not have access to the Internet. In this context a participant states that, ‘to some extent class will determine your access and use of the Internet. But that is not all black and white’ (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). Many organisations are striving to reach out to populations that do not have access to the Internet and help people in those remote areas to gain access, and use technology to benefit their business and livelihood. The type of technology chosen in these cases can also have a huge impact. For example, one of the participants shares her experience of working in slums and states that everyone there had a mobile phone. Most of them do not have Internet enabled mobile phones but they all can efficiently use available services including texting. She also said that she noticed a huge aspiration among people to get to know about the Internet, understand it, and start using it. Many of them were unable to do so because of the lack of access. In some cases, even people who did not have electricity had heard of the Internet and wanted to know more about it (Buragohain, 18 February 2015, interview with author, Skype).

Thus intersectionality now is not only limited to interconnections between gender and factors such as race, class, caste and religion but also factors related to digital technologies that are giving rise to new forms of discrimination and marginalisation. Hence, activists organising campaigns online should address these issues and carefully

select what technology to use to reach a certain population. In a country like India, using only the Internet leaves out a huge section of the population. However, using the Internet in combination with mobile phones and other ICTs helps to integrate a larger section of the population.

6.5 Conclusion

India is known for its diversity and over the past decade it has undergone various changes socially, politically and economically. Over the years, it has been proven by various research projects that people who exist at the intersection of both gender and caste in India suffer the most discrimination (Anne et al. 2013). Anne et al. (2013) maintain that most of the research conducted in terms of intersectionality is based on the western context of gender, race and class. In India the case is much more complex where various levels of discrimination act upon a framework for intersectionality that requires more attention. Crenshaw (1989) states that the experience of domestic violence, rape and remedial reform of women are located at the intersection of race and gender differs extensively from the experiences of white women (see Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations'). In India, women not only have to deal with abuse but they also have to deal with many other obstacles including routinised forms of domination, poverty, childcare and lack of job skills. In a lot of cases these women are completely dependent on their husbands and their lack of access to resources makes them less likely to have knowledge about available alternatives. Women who are from rural areas of India are more susceptible to violence than women of educated urban areas. Again women belonging to a lower caste have to contend with more abuse compared to women of higher castes (Anne et al. 2013) . Therefore it is important to contextualise the type and nature of violence faced by women might differ according to class, caste and geography.

On December 16, 2012 the rape of a 23 year old middle class girl in Delhi gave rise to one the biggest gender movements of recent times. It also gave rise to various conversations about gender and sexuality in the public discourse. However, the case also displays a complex nature of class, caste and gender intersectionality that has not

been extensively discussed. The social status of the victim and the geography of the incident played a vital role in the case garnering both national and international attention. Hence, in order to understand the nature of gender violence in India, and in order to find possible solutions, it is important to take into consideration all other intersecting social and political discriminations.

Even though caste and class are recognised forms of discrimination in Indian society, often the importance of these factors while addressing issues related to gender violence are not considered. In this research, class is not proposed as the only factor that led to the success of the Nirbhaya movement. However, the class aspect of the case necessitates further discussion in order to point out the hierarchies and contradictions that exist within Indian society, especially when looking at cases of gender violence. The intersection of factors including class, caste, geography and religion cannot be ignored because gender violence in India is often not separate but intrinsically linked with one or more of these factors. Such discussions are important not only in the level of activism but should also penetrate to the level of policy. According to Anne et al. (2013: 20), ‘strategical framework which is sound in its basic building blocks is needed to address the burning issue of gender and caste discrimination especially as this practice has been rooted historically into the Indian society’. Therefore it is of the utmost importance to educate and empower those women who fall within the intersections so as to actualise and resolve problems related to their extreme oppression and subjection to violence.

The next chapter: ‘Conclusion: The Beginning of the New Phase of the Indian Women’s Movement’ I summarise discussions from previous chapters highlighting the main findings of this research and set out recommendations for future research.

Conclusion: The Beginning of the New Phase of the Indian Women's Movement

In this research I consider the impact of ICTs, the internet, mobile phones and social media on socio-political activism specifically gender activism by focusing on the use of such technologies for gender activism in India. For this purpose, I have taken into consideration the protests after the December 16, 2012 New Delhi Nirbhaya Rape Case as a subject for evaluation for this research. One of the primary reasons for why I chose this case study lies in the fact that it generated one of the biggest gender movements in the India in recent time and also because of the extensive use of ICTs and social media organisation, mobilisation, dissemination of information, consciousness raising and creating solidarity. This case not only generated large scale protests but also generated valuable conversations on core issues related to feminism and gender including questions about patriarchy, structures of society, governance and masculinity. Hence, in this research I have looked at how ICTs and social media impacted the protests after the Nirbhaya movement and how it generated legal reforms, dialogues and debates around gender equality in Indian context.

I have also explored how organisations and individuals are using these technologies to create a difference and changing the nature of gender activism in India. In this concluding chapter of the research I summarise the discussions from the previous chapters highlighting the main findings. In the final section of this chapter, I will also aim to set out some recommendations for further research.

Violence against women is not an uncommon phenomenon in India and in many cases it often goes unnoticed (Simon-Kumar 2014). However, the rape case on December 16, 2012 in New Delhi was very different in this regard. India witnessed one of its biggest gender movements and social media and mobile phones played a huge role in it. In this research I focused on the gender activism in India after the December 16, 2012 Delhi rape case and explored the effect of social media and ICTs in the process of mobilization and collective action. ICTs and social media have given gender activism a new voice and new provided new ways to conduct activism in alternative platforms without the help of mainstream platforms. Therefore, the main research question for the

paper focuses on evaluating the impact of ICTs and social media on gender activism in India.

In Chapter 1: 'The Cyberconflict Framework and Conceptual Considerations', I contextualised the research by discussing the theoretical framework that guided the research forward. The cyberconflict theory devised by Karatzogianni (2006) has been considered as the main theoretical framework in order for us to understand the impact of ICTs and social media for gender activism. The framework lays out the following parameters to be looked at while analysing cyberconflicts: 1. Environments of conflicts and conflict mapping (real and virtual) 2. Sociopolitical cyberconflicts (mobilisation structures, political opportunity structure, framing process) 3. Ethnoreligious cyberconflicts (ethnic religious affiliation, chauvinism, discourses of inclusion and exclusion) 4. The internet as a medium/media theory (Karatzogianni 2006). McAdam et al. (1996) explains the emergence of social movements, their development and outcomes, by addressing three interrelated factors namely: mobilising structures, opportunity structures and framing processes. The importance of the cyberconflict framework lies in the fact that it integrates elements of social movement theories including mobilising structures, opportunity structures and framing processes with media and conflict theories to gain a detailed understanding of the origins, motivations, dynamics and impact of ICT and social media in these dimensions.

The case study chosen for the research is based on gender activism. However, the cyberconflict framework was not built with a gender focus. Hence, to successfully analyse the impact of ICTs and social media on gender activism, it was crucial to advance the theoretical foundation of the cyberconflict framework for it to create a broader understanding of the relation between social movements, gender and ICTs. For this research it was important to consider gender in the context of digital activism because power relations that exist in the real world also exist online. However, it is also important to remember that new digital technologies have been defining and redefining gender relations in different ways and activists across the globe have been using social media and ICTs to find new ways to collaborate and to reinvent activism (Gurumurthy 2004).

Karatzogianni (2006) structures the cyberconflict framework into three main sections: social movement theory, media theory and conflict theory. Following the same structure, in Chapter 1, I have discussed the theoretical foundation for the research. In talking about social movement theories I have aimed to understand the emergence, development and outcome of social movements that have witnessed extensive use of ICTs and social media by addressing the three interrelated factors of mobilising structures, opportunity structures and framing process (Karatzogianni 2006; Garrett 2006; McAdam 1996). Mobilisation structures can be defined as the processes by which a system is created to facilitate the contentious activities in a political situation (Olabs 2015). It is the mechanism that enables individuals and groups to engage in collective action. Mobilisation structures can encompass both formal structures, such as organisations and informal structures, such as networks of kinship or friendship (Garrett 2006). However, in both cases, the aim is to generate solidarity that holds the movement together and results in collective action. In this context, Zald & McCarthy (1979) also argue about the importance of collection of suitable resources that are necessary for the sustenance of social movements. ICTs and social media have been considered as important resources resulting in mobilisation, generating solidarity and increase of participation levels by facilitating member recruitment (Bonchek 1997).

Social movements depend heavily on the environment within which they operate. Garrett (2006) defines opportunity structures as the attributes of the social system that either facilitate or constrain a movement. Ayres (1999) emphasises that cultural and organisational factors must be included in the conceptual schemes of opportunity structures so that collective actors can create, as well as, frame new opportunities for mobilisation purposes. ICTs can have a great influence on opportunity structures and ICTs in combination with global economic processes have resulted in dissident activities becoming exceedingly transnational and in turn creating national level opportunity structures for social movement (Ayres 1999). The final concept discussed in relation to the social movement theory is framing process that has come to be regarded as a central dynamics in understanding the character and course of new social movements (Snow & Benford 1992; Goffman 1974). Social movement frames help in strategically framing the grievances that in turn assist in the forming of the narratives and the motivations that result in collective action. ICTs have also greatly influenced

the framing process with their ability to bypass mainstream media channels and avoid mass media filters, resulting in the creation of content without any distractions or distortions. This helps activists to shape movement narratives and allows them to respond to and correct misconceptions on movement activities (Scott & Street 2000).

In the second section of Chapter 1, I focus on media theories. ICTs and social media have played a huge role in the emergence and development of new social movements resulting in new models of participation, communication and collaboration (Mora 2014). In this context, Castells (1996) states the idea of networked society. A networked society has its roots in informationalism and is characterised by horizontal, non-hierarchical and networked models of communication. ICTs and social media have resulted in information being more accessible to a wide section of people resulting in drastic changes in the nature and availability of information and modes of communication, having far reaching changes in society itself (Mitchell 2003; Castells 2011b).

The movement selected for the research is based on gender activism and concepts related to gender and feminist activism form an integral part of the analysing process. However, the cyberconflict framework was not built with a gender focus and to successfully analyse a gender related movement, in the last section of the chapter 1, I extended it by mainstreaming gender in the theoretical framework. In this process, I have established the necessity of looking at social movements through the lens of gender, as experiences of women within social movements can be very different from that of men (Kuumba 2001).

Gender has great impact on all three aspects of the social movement framework (mobilisation structures, political opportunity structure and framing process) and to accurately understand the dynamics of a social movement, it must be looked at through the lens of gender. I acknowledge that the experiences of all women cannot be explained in the same way or be categorised under a single unified group. Violence faced by women is often shaped by other dimensions of their identity including race, class, caste and geography. In this context I have discussed the concept of

intersectionality by Crenshaw (1989) where she argues that the experiences of women of colour are often a result of intersecting patterns of sexism and racism. She states that the marginalisation, oppression and abuse faced by women of colour cannot be understood by considering feminist discourses and racism separately since race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political and representational aspects of violence against women of colour (Crenshaw 1991). This forms an important aspect of this research as the experiences of violence faced by women in India are also shaped by multiple axes of power within a society that result in further marginalisation of certain groups of women. The concept of intersectionality has been applied in an Indian context (see Chapter 6: 'The Intersection of Gender, Caste and Class in the Indian Context') to further understand experiences of women within a social movement environment.

One of the main discourses that emerged after the Nirbhaya case was about how patriarchy affects both genders and to achieve equality and end violence against women it is important that both genders are represented through activism. Therefore, in order to mainstream gender in the theoretical discourses of the framework, I have also considered the concept of masculinity. Masculinity does not simply mean talking about men but talking about the position of men in context of gender relations and gender order (Connell 2005). Connell (2005) argues that it is important to integrate men in the process of achieving gender equality because men control a large amount of resources required to implement women's claims for justice thus making them, in a very significant way, the 'gatekeepers for gender equality' (Connell 2005: 1802).

Finally in Chapter 1, I have discussed the relationship between women and ICTs. This is essential to understand in context of the use of ICTs for gender activism because there is a big gender divide when it comes to the access and use of technology (Hafkin 2002). Lack of infrastructure prevents women from accessing technologies that might be available to men and various social and cultural factors need to be taken into consideration when addressing these issues (Patel et al. 2012). In this context Jorge (2001), emphasises the importance of advocating for policy related to women's access and use of technology and sensitisation of policy makers about the importance of gender. However, ICTs and social media have changed the way in which activists and civil society actors are using these technologies to communicate, collaborate and

demonstrate. Online feminist activism has the power to mobilise the young, the old and everyone in between and take political actions at an unprecedented speed, in order to produce remarkable changes in the way advocacy and action is conducted within the feminist community (Martin & Valenti 2012).

In Chapter 2: 'Methodology and Empirical Analysis', I established the philosophical underpinning and methods that guided this research. To successfully conduct research it is important to establish suitable research stances and research paradigms. This research follows a qualitative methodology that aimed to understand complex Indian societal structures and experiences related to gender violence and gender activism. The Nirbhaya rape case that happened in Delhi on December 16, 2012 forms the core of this research. A case study approach has been used to fully understand the nature of gender movements and extend our understanding about the use of new digital technology in the field of gender activism in India. The case study approach helps in the detailed analysis of event, conditions and relationships using multiple sources of evidence (Yin 2014). According to Brennen (2012), the multiple methods approach to data collection helps in developing an in-depth understanding of social experiences. Therefore, in order to gain a detailed understanding of the research in question, I used a multi method approach for data collection which included the netographic approach for collecting online data and qualitative interviews (conducted both online and offline)

The data collection occurred in three phases. In the first phase of the research I collected online data in real time while the protests were happening in India in order to gain knowledge about the nature of the movements and relating it to core cyberconflict theories. This phase of data collection was conducted using the netnographic approach as proposed by Kozinets (2010). With the increase in popularity of ICTs and social media, more and more people are using these technologies and it is enabling and empowering the formation of online communities. Hence, Kozinets (2010) says that in order to understand society, people's activities and behaviours, their experiences on the Internet must be followed. To achieve this he proposed the concept of netnography which he described as a 'specialised form of ethnography adapted to the unique computer mediated contingencies of today's social worlds' (Kozinets 2010:1).

Each article that was collected in this phase was archived and then analysed from a theory driven point of view. I was trying to identify who the participants were, how and why they joined the movement, the political opportunity structure, the leadership structure, ideological frames and most importantly the use of ICTs for both online and offline activism. Each article was manually coded using the thematic analysis and then the codes were analysed and combined to form overarching themes (Braun & Clarke 2006). This aided in finding themes that I wanted to further explore in this research and directly led to the formulation of questions that were then used for the qualitative interviews. The data obtained from this phase was also used to identify particular participants and organisations that I wanted to interview in the next phase of data collection. The data from this stage was also used to make many of the choices that helped shape this research. For example, in Chapter 3, when tracing out the history of the Indian women's movement many of the cases mentioned in this research like Rameezabee, Maya Tyagi, Mathura, Bhanwari Devi were women whose stories were reiterated by the media after the Nirbhaya case. Further, in Chapter 6 when analysing rape cases from 1990 till 2012 in order to understand the punishment advocated for rapists, the cases that have been mentioned were all obtained from this stage of data collection.

In the second phase, I conducted a pilot study prior to the actual fieldwork in order to test the usefulness and effectiveness of the interview guide. In the final phase, I conducted qualitative interviews. These interviews were conducted both online on Skype and during my fieldwork in India. Two types of sampling techniques were used to find the participants for the research. Firstly, purposive sampling technique was used to identify certain specific participants who had contributed to the Nirbhaya protests or were associated with long-term gender activism in India. Secondly, the snowball sampling technique was used to find further participants for the research. I sought information about other potential participants from the ones who were selected through purposive sampling. This provided me with the possibility to open up their enquiry and reach out to people who otherwise would not be known to me (Atkinson & Flint 2001). The participants interviewed were divided into two groups, individual participants and participants representing organisations and NGOs. Keeping in mind issues related to privacy, individual participants were anonymised (Jorgensen 1989).

Since this research is deeply rooted in feminist ideologies all aspects of data collection and analysis were conducted from a feminist perspective. Relations that exist in society are structured around the positions of men and women and the power dynamics between them. Therefore, researching from a feminist point of view must include gender as a crucial element (Hammersley 1992). Consciousness raising is an important tool for gender activism allowing women to challenge the received knowledge and learn from each other (DeVault 1996). Thus, the idea of consciousness raising and the development of knowledge through meaningful discussions and collaborations was at the heart of this research. Care was taken to understand and respect the experiences of all participants and the relationship between the researcher and the participants at all times was reciprocal and non-hierarchical (Hammersley 1992; Oakley 1981). Ethical issues were also of prime importance to this research and the principle of anonymity, confidentiality and privacy were at its core (Wiles 2012). All participants were asked to sign a consent form through which they expressed their voluntary participation in the research, expressed their choice about anonymity and it also gave them the rights to withdraw at any point.

In Chapter 3: 'Brief history of the Indian Women's Movement and Tracing out the Socio-Political and Media Environment', I map a brief history of the Indian Women's Movement (IWM), tracing out the political and media landscape of the country including digital developments and shortcomings. To fully understand the nature of the women's movement in India and the sociopolitical environment of the country, I have discussed movements that were specifically related to gender violence and some other movements that led to mass mobilisation resulting in significant sociopolitical change. The other movements spoken about in this chapter saw large numbers of women participants and shaped the contemporary sociopolitical scenario, which had great effects on the IWM. These movements have also been considered because within the social movement environment, the experiences of women and men can be very different and this further justifies the necessity to look at the cyberconflict framework through the lens of gender and extend it for it include the experiences of women separately.

The 1970s saw a revival of autonomous feminist groups in India. Inspired by global trends of the second wave of feminism and cases of gender violence that took place in the national context, feminists across India started talking about gender violence such as custodial rape and dowry murders. It was the first time that violence against women, both in the public and within the family was given such importance. The campaigns by feminist groups finally led to a change in law titled Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act 1983, which included defining custodial rape and gang rape (Gandhi & Shah 1992). The movements in the 1970s raised many questions about the nature of the movement itself, which in turn led to a change in strategy by many feminist groups who started focusing on developing a community of solidarity and sisterhood where women could come and express themselves freely (Kumar 1989).

The feminist movement in the 1980s raised questions about the position of women within families and they rallied around the rights of Muslim women. However, they soon realised that women's rights can be shaped by the beliefs of a certain community making them question the idea of secularism and representation of women in India (Kumar 1993). In 1997, the Supreme Court of India issued guidelines to fight against sexual harassment at work and the new law aimed to ensure a safe working environment and full dignity to women within their work place (Vij 13 October 2007). The advent of ICTs and social media started a new phase in the IWM. In this context, I discuss the media environment in India, as well as establishing important topics such as emergence of ICTs, digital divide and censorship. This chapter forms the backbone of the understanding of the IWM and the social, political, technological and media environment within which these movements operate. This is extremely important to develop a complete analysis of the use of ICTs in gender activism in India.

Following the gender inclusive cyberconflict framework designed for this research, the analysis has been divided into three chapters. The data obtained from the netnographic approach and the qualitative interviews has shaped this analysis and it has been displayed in chapters 4, 5 and 6. In Chapter 4: 'Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework', I analyse the Nirbhaya case following the social movement framework to understand the emergence, development and outcome of the movement. This chapter also answers the first research: how did the

sociopolitical activism in India take place after the 'Nirbhaya Rape Case' on December 16, 2012? This includes identifying the participants, the recruitment process, the mobilisation structures, political opportunity structures and the framing processes.

In Chapter 5: 'Nirbhaya and Beyond- The Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender activism in India', I look at the impact of ICTs and social media within the Nirbhaya movement following the media theory framework. This chapter is used to answer research questions 2 and 3. What was the role of ICTs and social media during the Nirbhaya protests? And how have ICTs and social media helped in creating a bigger gender movement and changed the nature of gender activism in India post the Nirbhaya case?

Finally in Chapter 6: 'The Intersection of Gender, Caste and Class in the Indian Context', I critically examine the Nirbhaya movement through the lens of intersectionality to establish that gender violence in India is a result of multiple axes of power and discrimination that includes class, caste, religion and geography. This chapter answers the final research questions: How do gender discourses affect digital activism in India and what factors need to be taken into consideration to understand the relation between gender and ICTs?

In Chapter 4: 'Analysing the Nirbhaya Case through the Lens of the Social-Movement Framework', the Nirbhaya case has been analysed through the lens of the social movement theory framework. In order to understand the emergence, development and outcome of social movements, Karatzogianni (2006), in the cyberconflict framework specifically uses resource mobilisation theories and new social movement theories by addressing the effects of ICTs and social media on mobilisation structures, political opportunity structure and framing process. The mobilisation structure has been further divided into categories such as participation, recruitment, leadership, tactics and goals (Garrett 2006).

When the news of the rape and the protests were telecasted across the media, thousands of people gathered on the streets. The participants included both individuals and organisations. Social media and mobile phones played a big role in generating mobilisation and distribution of information. A large section of the participants received information about the protests through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, texts or mobile phone applications such as Whatsapp. ICTs and social media also allowed participants who physically could not be there at the protest marches, continue the conversation in the online space.

As I have shown, one of the most remarkable aspects of the Nirbhaya protest was the participation of individuals who came together for a common cause. A vast section of the conversation happening on Facebook and Twitter was being generated and driven by individual men and women who had no aspirations of being associated with any non-profits organisations or politics but who understood feminism at its core, people who were extremely passionate about gender issues or people who were just deeply affected by the case. The participation of ‘the individual’ also resulted a big shift in the nature of activism, as individuals were now generating a lot of the defining conversations that was previously carried out by activists and NGOs. It also resulted in generating new ideas, thoughts and opinions in the activist space.

According to McCarthy (1996), networks of kinship and friendship have been central to the understanding of movement recruitment as well as to understanding the formation of emergent local movement groups. Similarly, as the Nirbhaya movement demonstrates, a large section of the mobilisation structure was formed on networks of kinship or friendship and large groups of friends, family members, peers and colleagues formed the core structures of the protests marches. McCarthy & Zald (1977) emphasise the importance of collection of resources for a movement to be successful. In this context, ICTs and social media played a huge role in attracting new people to the movement and provided activists with new and innovative ways to collect resources required to drive a movement forward.

Horizontal, rhizomatic, leaderless structures have been the characteristic of the networked society (Castells 1996, 2007, 2011; Deleuze & Guattari 1988). However, this research challenges this notion by demonstrating how ICTs and social media in some cases have given rise to different leadership structures in the Indian context. The Indian women's movement has always predominantly leaderless and that was one of the strengths of the movement. However, after the advent of ICTs people have been more willing to come forward and take role of leadership for the span of a campaign. Many of the online feminist campaigns in India operate in short cycles and only run for a short span of time, so someone can be leader of a specific campaign only for a short period. Once the campaign is over, their leadership ceases as well. As this research demonstrates, even though the Nirbhaya movement was a people's movement and characterised by horizontal structures and decentralised co-ordination, there were many self-appointed leaders who shouted slogans, tried to convenience people about the demands of the movement and also started various smaller sub-movements under the umbrella of the bigger movement.

According to Garrett (2006), political opportunity structures can be defined as attributes of a social system that facilitate or constrain movement activity and thus must be taken into consideration when crafting movement actions. There were several factors that resulted in creating the opportunity structure for the Nirbhaya movement. One of the main factors was the economic and political conditions, including a series of corruption charges against the government and the deeply unimpressive economic performance of the country, which instigated the rise of the middleclass Indian. Nationwide anti-corruption movements in 2011 saw large scale use of ICTs and social media, which laid the foundation for the Nirbhaya movement. Global movements such as the 'One Billion Rising' and the uprisings in the Middle East also influenced the rise of protest activities in India by showing people the power of ICTs and social media and also restoring their faith in the power of mass protests. Irrespective of the big role played by ICTs and social media, the influence of mainstream media also cannot be ignored, as extensive coverage of the incident highlighting discourses such as the failure of the government as well as women's safety and security inspired people to take to the streets.

The Nirbhaya movement was framed around demanding justice for the victim. However, large numbers of participants from different backgrounds made it difficult for the entire movement to have a consistent narrative. In some cases, it was witnessed that the participants of the protests did not have a clear understanding of gender issues and that their ideas were actually regressive and patriarchal. This was especially clear when people highlighted issues such as protecting women as the main focus of the movement, which in itself was extremely patriarchal. This was also clear when the demand of death penalty, on many occasions, took over the movement, drawing attention away from issues that needed to be addressed. Even though the demand for death penalty emerged as a significant issue, most activists and feminist leaders were against it. However, irrespective of the divide in demands and several intersecting narratives within the movement the group mostly remained united by the demand for justice for Nirbhaya. The second part of the chapter talks about government's reactions to the protests and the changes in law in order to understand the outcome of the movement and also find areas for future change and activism.

In Chapter 5: 'Nirbhaya and Beyond- The Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India', I have discussed the significance of using of ICTs and social media in the Nirbhaya movement for gender activism in India. In India today it is estimated that there are about 243 million Internet users which represents a penetration of about 19.19% of the current population (Internetlivestats 2014). According to a report published by the Internet and Mobile Association of India, there are 875 million mobile users in India and according to an Aventus Capital report, out of the total internet users, 86 million accessed the internet on their mobile devices in 2013 (Singh 12 January 2014). It has also been noted that the number of female internet users has grown exponentially from 16 million in 2013 to 20.77 million in 2014 which represents a growth of 30 per cent (The Economic Times 12 November 2014).

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Nirbhaya case was the intense introspection that India witnessed in terms of natures of society, governance and patriarchy leading to valuable conversations, both on a public and personal level, across different media channels. After the Nirbhaya case, people started talking openly about issues that they would not even talk about at home a few years ago. In this context, a participant

comments that when she was growing up her mother would not even use the term bra and called it underwear instead. She said that after the Nirbhaya case she witnessed some parents openly discussing sexual violence and even mothers participating in the protest marches with their daughters, which was a welcome change (Jaganathan, 7 March 2014, interview with author, London). She further explains that it is essential to have these conversations within the family because a lot of sexual violence in India originates from within the family (Jaganathan, 7 March 2014, interview with author, London). These conversations occurring in an online space not only resulted in creating consciousness but also helped in developing a community of solidarity that encouraged women to step out and either talk about their experiences or report the crimes committed against them. ICTs have also created a platform for both rural women and poor urban women to tell their stories, which would have been otherwise lost.

The diffusion of internet, mobile communication and social media has led to the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication, that include the multimodal exchange of interactive messages from many to many, both synchronous and asynchronous, that connect global and local at a chosen time leading to the formation of a networked society (Karatzogianni 2006). Online activism has encouraged the formation of new connections and collaboration between grassroots advocacy and service organisations, educational institutions, coalitions, media agencies, policy makers, politicians and entrepreneurs (Martin and Valenti 2012). Connections set up online by different organisations in India are helping to create meaningful collaboration between different sectors including grass root activists, charities and corporate bodies all over the world. Thus, as Morozov puts it, ‘in the past one needed a fortune or, at least, a good name to cause much damage. Today all one needs is an Internet connection’ (Morozov 2009: 12). As such, this chapter explores the changing nature of activism in India specifically looking at the importance of the internet, social media and mobile phones.

Cheaper Smartphones and the growing telecommunications industry have together pushed India towards a digital revolution and helped create a new platform of activism, especially for educated urban middleclass Indians across the globe. It also has given Indian immigrants all over the world an avenue to be involved in the ongoing activism

India, irrespective of their physical absence. In this chapter I also look at transnational activism and explore how digital technologies have made activism transcend beyond geographical boundaries enabling immigrants all across the world to be a part of activism in India resulting in the creation of a global gender movement.

In Chapter 6: 'The Intersection of Gender, Caste and Class in the Indian Context', I explore the concept of intersectionality with particular reference to the interconnectedness of gender, class and caste discriminations in India. The concept of Intersectionality was put forward by Crenshaw (1989) considering the issues faced by black women in the United States. She states that the way in which experience of domestic violence, rape and remedial reform of women located at the intersection of race and gender differs extensively from that of white women (Crenshaw 1991). However, I have applied the same framework in the Indian context to understand the nature of violence and discrimination faced by women in India and to explore the intersecting factors such as class, caste, religion and geography when looking at gender violence.

Even though much of the work on intersectionality was done by scholars from the United States, with specific emphasis on gender and race, this framework can be applied universally to understand the multiple axes of power within a society that results in further marginalisation of certain groups of women (Shields 2008; Bilge 2010). It is important to look at gender violence in India through the lens of intersectionality since gender violence is often a result of multiple levels of discrimination on the basis of class, caste, religion and geography (Anne et al. 2013). This is also important to recognise to ensure that the activism, education and change of policy can to resolve problems related to extreme oppression and violence against women across the country irrespective of their social backgrounds.

The Nirbhaya case displayed a complex nature of class, caste and gender intersectionality that has not been extensively discussed. The social status of the victim and the geography of the crime played a crucial role in the case garnering the kind of attention it did. There is sexual hierarchy where some female bodies are placed over

others and in case of Nirbhaya the dynamics were reversed where men belonging to a much lower class raped an educated middle class girl (Kabeer 5 March 2015). The Nirbhaya case affected the middle class sentiment and she was perhaps the ideal victim that could trigger a protest like this (Christie 1986). Geography also played a big role. When cases of gender violence occur in a rural landscape, they do not attract the attention of the urban middleclass as it does not affect the flow of urban life and therefore is often forgotten (Dutta, 20 February 2015, interview with author, Skype). However, the Nirbhaya case took place in the heart of urban India. In this context a participant says, 'It happened close to home and to a girl from the middle class background. So people could identify with the survivor and what happened to them' (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). If this could happen to her, it could happen to anyone.

Mainstream media attention also resulted in the case becoming one of the biggest gender movements in India. In this case Patil & Purkayastha (2015) state that some myths exist when mainstream media report cases of rape, whereby they distinguish 'real rape' or 'ideal rape' from 'not real' rape. In case of an 'ideal' or 'real' situation the rape takes place outside the house, usually at night, where the female victim is attacked, usually with a weapon, by a 'monstrous' male stranger. In this case, the victim's appearance or behaviour cannot be challenged and the victim physically resists the attack and also sustains visible injuries (Patil & Purkayastha 2015: 600). Thus in case of Nirbhaya she was not only the ideal victim but it was also the 'ideal rape' resulting in immediate and huge media coverage.

Crenshaw (1994), not only talks about the ideal victim but also talks about the disproportional ratio that has been noticed when it comes to the punishment of the perpetrator, especially if they belonged to a minority community (Crenshaw 1994). The same pattern can be noticed in an Indian context where the body of an upper caste, upper class woman is considered to be most important and the perpetrators belonging to the lower class, lower caste are considered to fit the image of the rapist 'monster' (Kabeer 5 March 2015). Lower caste, lower class perpetrators are also given harsher punishments, which follows the theory proposed by Crenshaw (1989) where she states that black men faced harsher and longer punishment compared to white men and the

punishment was most severe when the crime was committed against a white women by a black man. A summary of some of rape cases from 1990 till 2012 showed that only in two cases was the death penalty awarded to the accused and in both cases the perpetrators were socially and economically backward and the victims belonged to the educated middle class. In all other cases, the victims were either middle class or low class but the perpetrators belonged to a higher class and were socially and economically more influential compared to the victim. None of the accused in these cases were given the death sentence. Some of them were even acquitted and the maximum punishment given was life imprisonment.

Key Research Findings

One of the most important aspects of this research is mainstreaming gender in the cyberconflict framework because it extends the framework by making in more inclusive and versatile. Various scholars, when looking at social movements, tend to forget the fact that experiences of different people who are involved in a social movement can greatly vary depending on their gender (Horn 2013). It is only in recent times that some social movement theorists have started looking at movements through the lens of gender in order to gain a more complete idea about the movement and also to recognise the different levels of discrimination that exists within a social movement environment which under normal circumstances can potentially go unnoticed (West & Blumberg 1990). Taylor (1999) argues that the synthesis of theories on gender and social movements provide a better understating of not only social movements but also have the potential to advance the understanding of gender change processes by making explicit the role of social movements in the social construction and reconstruction of gender.

The cyberconflict framework combines features of social movement (resource mobilisation theory RMT and New Social Movement NSM), conflict and media theories to examine the impact of ICTs on conflicts and social movements across the globe. However, several discriminations that exist in the real world also exist in the online space (Gurumurthy 2004) and thus gender needs to be an integral part of the cyberconflict framework so that it can generate a complete understanding of the use of

ICTs within a movement that witnesses large scale use of ICTs and social media (Horn 2013). Motta et al. (2011) agree that there is a need for a framework that would allow a 'distinctively feminist mode of analysing social movements or collective agency' and 'a clear theoretical reflection of the distinctive organising practices often ascribed to women's movements' (Motta et al. 2011: 11). This study has addressed this gap in research and presented a framework that would allow researchers and activists understand the experiences of women within a social movement environment. The extension of the framework was not only essential for this specific research but it can be applied to all movements across the globe encouraging more researchers to critically look at social movements and digital activism through the lens of gender.

The Delhi rape incident led to an intense public introspection into the nature of Indian society and the current structures of governance that have failed to keep women safe (Simon-Kumar 2014). The growing discontent against the government and the need for change provided the perfect political opportunity for the civil society organisations and gender activists. However, what was spectacular about the movements was the huge number of individuals who participated in the protests activities, both online and offline. Meikle (2002) states that access to ICTs has created new kinds of communities but this resurgence of community flows through a new kind of individual empowerment. The online digital space has allowed individuals to become activists without having to root themselves in any organisations or NGOs. Many of the conversations online were led by individual men and women who had no aspirations to be associated with any non-profits organisations, but people who were deeply affected by the case or ones who wanted gender equality and justice.

The Nirbhaya case triggered, as Simon-Kumar (2014: 452) states, 'both publicness and personalisation of rape' in a way that had not happened before. ICTs and mobile phones have resulted in the blurring of lines between the private and the public, the real and the virtual, resulting personal narratives becoming public (Plummer 2002). The study conducted by Foster (2015) revealed that tweeting about sexism can result in collective action, solidarity and increase of wellbeing in women. As the Nirbhaya case demonstrates, several women across India came forward to share their personal stories of abuse and violence in order to create solidarity and spread awareness. Previously it

was just women's organisations and non-profits that were responsible for spreading awareness and creating solidarity. However, with ICTs and social media, individuals have been able to take up this role.

As I have shown in this research, a very important slogan that emerged after the Nirbhaya case was 'silence no more' which aimed to inspire women to step out and either talk about their experiences or report the crimes committed against them. This has created a community of solidarity, ensuring that women realise that they have support and if they do not get that support they need from people in authority, they can find it in alternative spaces. This has also given voice to several women who otherwise would have been silenced by the system or by their own families. Thus social media has helped to fill in the huge void that exists in Indian society in terms of giving women a platform where they can talk about their issues and get support from others within the community. This establishes that these personal stories have further helped to establish that 'personal problems are political problems' (Hanisch 1970: 77) and these conversations are also essential to raise awareness, create solidarity and inform women about the different layers of oppression that exists in the Indian society (McCann & Kim 2013).

This research further demonstrates how individual voices have become extremely important in the activist space resulting in a big shift in terms of activism in India. It has resulted in a shift in the tone of conversation and a shift in style of content and resulted in new thoughts, ideas and opinions in the activist space. However, this has also resulted in many activists questioning their role in the activist space in current times. Thus, in order for their activism to be relevant and important, they will have to relearn activism and find new ways to create opportunities, build profitable relationships, collect resources, develop collective identity, generate mobilisation and lobby.

In recent times, ICTs and social media have played an immense role in contentious activities across the globe (Karatzogianni 2006; Garrett 2006). However, in many countries like India, mainstream television is still one of the most important and widely accessed media channels. The support of the media is essential for the success of any

social movement because media are an important means of reaching the general public, getting their approval and to mobilise potential participants. Media also has the potential to link movements with other social and political actors and provide psychological support for social movement (Karatzogianni 2006).

One of the main questions addressed by this research relates to the role of social media and ICTs for gender activism in India. Even though the Nirbhaya movement was known as the movement that marked Indian's digital transformation for its increased use of digital technologies, this research establishes that it is mainstream and not digital media that initially started the movement, stirred people up and brought the issue into people's home and lives. Only after the case had gathered sufficient momentum on mainstream media did various digital media channels pick it up. This directly raises the question that to what extent was the revolution tweeted? And to what extent can ICTs and social media can currently be used for gender activism in India.

Due to the great digital divide that exists in India, a large section of the population has no access to the Internet but many of them do have access to television (Gurumurthy 2004; Rao 2005). As I have shown in this research, in the Nirbhaya protests, it is mainstream media that played a more vital role in generating solidarity and mobilisation compared digital media (See Chapter 5: Nirbhaya and Beyond- The Role of Social Media and ICTs in the gender activism in India). After the case, every news channels constantly showed updates from the case, footage from the protest marches and raised question about issues related to the position of women in the Indian society, their safety and security. It helped in bringing the issue quickly to the attention of the general masses and build solidarity that led to the start of the protest cycles. As a participant noted, every household had their televisions on and they were getting constant updates about what was happening. The extensive coverage and constant viewing of images related to the incident further channelised the anger of the people and created the mass anger and solidarity that was essential to drive the movement forward (Participant 8, 22 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi).

However, my research points to the need to understand that digital technologies can be a 'double edged sword' (Meikle & Young 2012: 144) and while it can provide some women with a platform to voice their opinions, it can result in further marginalisation for some others. Thus, in this context, it is important to understand the negative impact of digital technologies. While ICTs and social media have provided women with various opportunities, it has also allowed perpetrators to use the same technology for further abuse. For example, in many cases the perpetrators now film the abuse and use the recording as a silencing mechanism for their victims.

The internet has also provided people with a free platform to voice their opinions and this platform was used by several individuals to talk about gender issues in India post the Nirbhaya case. Post-Nirbhaya, a huge section of people online claimed to be feminists and started supporting and talking about feminist ideas. However, many among them were either not aware of the true principles of feminism or were influenced by peer pressure. A huge number of individuals without the knowledge about core gender issues, in many cases, compromised the nature and quality of the conversation. For example a lot of the discourse had been concerned with protection, security and how men need to 'man-up' and protect their women (Arora, 30 October 2014, interview with author, New Delhi). This research establishes that these conversations and ideas are harmful as they were not addressing gender issues but helping in strengthening concepts of patriarchy. Hence, activists must definitely be cautious of campaigns conducted online as it can be extremely difficult to control the quality and nature of the conversations and limit the number of people who might be negatively affected by these conversations.

India, like many other countries, is widely multilingual and multicultural, which has led to vastly different perspectives on gender, inequalities and power relations (Orchard 2004). Thus, to analyse movements in India or carry out activist work, it is extremely important to consider the interconnections of several factors such as class, caste, gender, religion and geography (Anne et al. 2013). The concept of intersectionality arose from the pioneering work done by black feminists in the United States and United Kingdom on the hierarchical nature of inequality and dominance (Bilge 2010). However, in this research I have applied the same framework in the Indian context to explore the

intersecting factors of class, caste and geography when looking at gender violence. Using the Nirbhya case, this research establishes the need to look at gender violence and the rationale for the production of media attention and resultant action through the lens of intersectionality.

However, in times when digital technologies form such an important part of social movements, it is important to apply the concept of intersectionality even in digital context. While in the real world intersecting factors like class, caste, race and geography play a crucial role in defining, separating and understanding the experiences of different women, there are several factors in the digital world that similarly separates the experiences of women (Gurumurthy 2004). This research established that the two of the main intersecting factors that divide the experiences of women in the digital space in India are language and access. This is specifically important for a country such as India because of the multilingual nature of society and the existence of a huge digital divide. Not only rural women but large sections of urban women also do not have access to technology that is required for participating in online activism. Thus intersectionality now is not only limited to interconnections between gender and factors, such as race, class, caste and religion, but also factors related to digital technologies that have giving rise to new forms of discriminations and marginalisation. This has been termed as digital intersectionality in this research. Hence, activists organising campaigns online need to address these issue and carefully select what technology to use to reach a certain population. It is also important to remember that campaigns aimed at women across the country should use a combination of online and offline resources to develop consciousness, reach women across the country and not to further marginalise certain sections of the population by denying them access to relevant information and the opportunity to participate in the process of activism.

This research demonstrates that in the Nirbhaya case, whilst 24 hour news channels did help by broadcasting the case and gender concerns in every household, social media also helped in creating a community and generating solidarity and mobilisation. It also helped in spreading the message and getting a whole new demographic of people involved in both online and offline activism, raise consciousness and keep the movement active. It provided women with an alternative platform to share their stories,

discuss, debate and build solidarity. However, in a world where digital activism is becoming increasingly popular, activists must take advantage of mainstream media and find a balance in the use of technology so that different populations can be reached, consciousness can be raised and be aware not to marginalise certain sections of women just by using technology that is not available to them. Finally, in case of India there is a need for a multidimensional approach where changes need to happen not only from top down in terms of policies but also from bottom up in terms of organisation and NGOs who work on the grassroots level to make sure that changes are implemented. Hence, even though digital activism has been gaining increasing popularity, at this stage any online activism must be accompanied by on-ground activism for the movement to be inclusive and beneficial for women across the country.

Further Research

This research is one of the first in-depth analyses of the Nirbhaya case using the cyberconflict perspective and to explore the impact of ICTs and social media for gender activism in India. This study gave rise to several questions and further research is required to deepen the findings and to progress the current research. In this research I briefly discussed the topic of masculinity but in case of digital activism, the intersection of men, masculinity and digital media is a topic that has not been sufficiently researched. In this context Light (2013) writes that when it comes to our idea about digital media, men need to be gendered beyond the sexual. He further states that there is a need to study what he calls 'networked masculinity' and he defines it as 'masculinities that are (co) produced and reproduced in conjunction with digitally mediated networked publics and their associated properties' (Light 2013: 253). Connell (2014) also argues that various social and historical factors could affect the construction of masculinity locally. However, local gender order now not only interacts with gender orders in other local societies but also with the gendered order in the global arena (Connell 2014: 1804). The Nirbhaya movement saw an increased participation of men across the country. Though I have discussed this briefly in this research (See: Chapter 5: Nirbhaya and Beyond- The Role of Social Media and ICTs in Gender Activism in India), the participation of men in gender activism and formation of new kinds of masculinities in

the Indian digital space and looking at the use of ICTs and social media by men for gender activism, is a topic that requires further research.

In talking about the participation of men in gender activism it is important to look at the HeForShe campaign. HeForShe, a campaign that was launched in 2014, urges men to stand up and speak out about inequalities faced by women. The campaign was launched by a speech given by Emma Watson at the United Nations. While, on one hand, the campaign generated a lot of media hype and attention, on the other hand, feminists across the globe have been very critical of it. Many of the participants I interviewed said that it was another media campaign that will not have any sustainable impacts. Some of them also raised questions about the impact of such a campaign in India and if at all it could create any 'real changes'. The role of men in gender activism is a topic that has been discussed often after the Nirbhaya case. However, the impact of global campaigns such as HeForShe in an Indian context is a topic that requires further research.

Even though this research is about gender activism it has focused mainly on activism concerning violence against women. In talking about the use of ICTs, internet and social media by the asexual community in India Saxena (18 March 2015) comments,

People generally do not view online forums as a source of education, but the asexual community flocks to the internet. The democratised nature of online publishing has carried the voice of the marginalised where print or visual media just won't, and that includes marginalised orientations, gender alignments and identities (MOGAI). We write our own stories because no one else will. In another time, that sentiment would have been empowering, but today, when sexuality studies are of growing importance, it's rather disappointing to see only the L, the G and the T of the acronym LGBTQIA+ being discussed.

(Saxena 18 March 2015)

Thus, there is a need to look at how the homosexual, bisexual, asexual, transgender and queer community in India are using ICTs and social media in India to fight for their rights, raise awareness and create solidarity.

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