

The Epistemological Relevance of Feminist Hashtags

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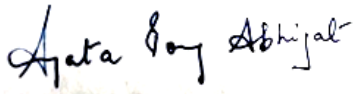
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DECLARATION

I declare that the Dissertation titled “**The Epistemological Relevance of Feminist Hashtags**” submitted by me in University of Delhi is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other Degree of this University or any other University.

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

The research work embodied in this thesis entitled “**The Epistemological Relevance of Feminist Hashtags**” has been carried out by me at the Department of Philosophy, University of Delhi, Delhi, India. The manuscript has been subjected to plagiarism check by **Orkund** Software.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

There are different ways to study feminism. One of the ways is to study it by analyzing the waves of feminism. Though there are differences of opinion on the number of waves of feminism so far, we would like to hold on to the generally accepted view that there are four waves of feminism so far and we try to research into one of the hallmarks of fourth wave feminism, the feminist hashtags.

A hashtag is the pound sign or the sharp note in musical notation. In the contemporary society, the use of hashtag helps in the social networks to find messages with a particular theme and content. Social media makes use of hashtag to draw attention, to arrange and to accelerate particular messages. Hashtag increases the chances of being found, it becomes a link to search queries, and one can reveal one's personality through the hashtag that will help the person to engage or disengage with an audience.

From a feminist perspective, hashtags are considered as the corollary of fourth wave feminism or online feminism. They have created a virtual space for personal narratives. Hashtag feminism includes normative and descriptive components of feminism (Dixon 2014). The normative claims on how the women should be viewed and treated and the descriptive claims on how they are viewed and treated are represented well in hashtags. Hashtag is a way of sharing one's own narrative and, as a result it creates personal narrative group. Feminist hashtag is a platform where we can listen to the voice of women and learn from their experiences. It starts with superficial and public information and slowly it progresses towards sharing one's own feelings that leads to reveal one's own goals and ambitions. It's a constant process of showing one's own identity and inner self.

As a result of the exposure of the personal through the hashtag, women are able to form a virtual community to self identity and to forge identities that are greater than the society has forced upon them.

OBJECTIVE

The aim of my research is to explore whether hashtag could be used as a platform for feminist knowledge production and if it helps in feminist knowledge production, can the hashtag pave the way for feminist policy making? Or should we look at hashtag as confessional tales of growing up and immature complaints of women? If the women are trying to bring out their private, emotional, interiorized and individualized spheres (MacKinnon) through hashtag, society comes to know the women's situation and hashtag function as a personal narrative that specify their vision. Hashtag could be made use of in order to present feminist epistemology and hashtag could be promoted to undo the epistemic injustice (Fricker) done towards the women. Is it limited only to undo the epistemic injustice? Do the feminist hashtags help the development of social epistemology and other relevant ideas of epistemology? As a result one will be able to uphold the thesis that *though there are people who consider hash tags as momentary and frenzy, they are a platform for feminist epistemology and feminist policy making. Moreover, the hashtags assist the development of social epistemology and reconsider the notion of objectivity.*

RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC

In the contemporary era, feminists make use of social media to share their stories so that the society might be receptive to the feminist principles. If so, the thesis becomes significant as it will help the academic community not to write off the hashtag as immature story of a woman rather to acknowledge it as a source of knowledge that shape

public discourse on the basis of the knowledge presented. Moreover, an epistemological study into hashtag helps the development of social epistemology and re-reflects on the epistemological idea of objectivity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kira Cochrane and Jessica Valenti present hashtag as fourth wave feminism. Yang in her studies enlightens the reader how digital activism modify the discussions in the public and affects public reasoning. E. Losh brings out how hashtag feminism and twitter activism functions in the Indian context. Kristin Dixon underlines the importance of feminist online identity as it gives a space for the victims of inequality a space to acknowledge their pain and narrate their experience of isolation. We have other feminist thinkers who speak of hashtag as something that galvanize social movements and medium for political conversations. They speak of how hashtag solidify an identity and calibrate group power. Giel Anne considers hashtag as a medium for attaining the feminist objectives and for popularizing feminist voices. Zaba Blay agrees with Giel and enlightens on how hashtag framed and forwarded dialogues concerning women's issues and feminism in an unprecedented manner. Hashtag has provided a transformative space for feminist discourse. Moreover, Blay analyses 21 hashtags and the impact they created on feminist thinking.

In the research, I would like to contribute to these existing literatures by emphasizing the role of hashtag in feminist knowledge production. In order to build up the bridge between the hashtag and feminist epistemology, I would like to dwell on the feminist epistemology elaborated by Miranda Fricker. Though the standpoint theory of Harding recognizes differences among women and women's diversity central to epistemology, how can one build up the inter-subjective relations among the hashtag contributors? Do we need the idea of inter-subjectivity to compliment strong objectivity of Harding when we build up feminist epistemology with the help of hashtag? Borrowing the terms of Fricker, i. e.,

testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice, one will be able to present the idea that hashtag unveils testimonial and hermeneutical injustice and as such hashtag helps gaining knowledge by being told and making sense of our social experiences.

The present research begins that process of analysis by exploring into the feminist philosophical scholarship of first wave feminism that attempted to achieve political rights for women, second wave feminism that analyzed the gender oppression due to the master/slave model and the third wave feminism that prioritize the individual above the social in order to place hashtag movement in feminism in the historical lineage of feminism proper.

SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The scope of this research includes the analysis of the famous feminist hashtags of the West and India. As people who use social media, we are influenced by the hashtags more than ever. The reflection and analysis on the hashtag in the research will unveil the possibilities in philosophy of knowledge in general and in feminist epistemology in particular.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology I pursue in the thesis is an exploratory, analytical and feminist approach on the famous western and Indian feminist hashtags of recent times.

- a) Analytical Approach: The basic method to be used is to analyze the existing works and apprehend its significance in the area of Feminist Epistemology and Policy Making.

- b) Feminist Approach: The research work is primarily focused on the Feminist viewpoint and approach the online hashtag as the pathway for feminist epistemology.
- c) Critical Approach: A critical and comprehensive analysis of hashtag is followed in the research to represent the authenticity of the knowledge production through hashtag.

In a special way, every chapter is analyzed and complimented with some of the major teachings of Miranda Fricker, one of the contemporary feminist epistemologists.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

General Introduction

CHAPTER 1, *An Expedition into the Waves of Feminism*, is a historical analysis of Feminist Movement and the Inclusion of Hashtag in the Lineage of Feminist Movement. Empowerment is one of the most cherished concepts of feminist thinkers. The first wave feminist movement wanted to empower woman by gaining the right to vote. The second wave feminism looked for equality of woman for empowerment. The third wave feminism upheld the ideals of individualism and diversity for empowerment and the fourth wave feminism makes use of cyberspace for empowerment. We explore in a special way on how the representative slogans of the first three waves of feminism were like the precursors of hashtags and how the spokeswomen of the first three waves of feminism present the necessity of space for writing and how, as a continuation to the previous waves, the fourth wave feminists make use of the cyber space as a space for addressing feminist concerns through hashtags which are the contemporary versions of slogans. We also recognize certain similarities of concerns in all the waves of feminism.

CHAPTER 2, *An Examination into the Epistemology of the Waves of Feminism Hashtag*, inspects Knowledge Production and the Epistemic Value of Hashtag. The hashtag that we make use of in this chapter for our analysis is #RapeCultureIsWhen. The goal of feminist epistemology is to create best social situation for women and other oppressed groups (Grasswick). The ideals of *epistemic community* of Longino (1990), *strong objectivity* of Harding (1991) and *epistemic injustice* of Fricker (2007) look for providing the best social situation for women. We analyze two epistemological theses, i.e., situated knowledge thesis and epistemic advantage thesis, on developing the theme of how hashtags assist in knowledge production. The idea of situated knowledge explains how experiences specific to oppressed members of groups can serve as the basis of the development of important insights (Harding 1991, Hartsock 1983). Hashtag could be considered as a new way of understanding the links between gender and knowledge.

CHAPTER 3, *An Exploration into the Testimonial Aspects Feminist Hashtag*, is an investigation into the transmission of knowledge (Welbourne) and generation of knowledge (Kusch) through testimony with help of the hashtag #WhyIStayed. Feminist slogans and hashtags are a media of testimonial exchange. When the issues of differential credulity and credibility arise the tenet of situated knowing comes to the aid of the feminist thinker. By relying on someone else's word, can it be a reliable source of knowledge? Trust is rich potential for feminists. Trust is dangerous and it involves attitude of optimism. Building up of the climate of trust generates knowledge of the forces and dynamics of oppressed. Trust helps to overcome identity prejudice and testimonial injustice. We need to come out of the practice of *testimonial quieting* and the *testimonial smothering*. Hashtag is an apt tool in doing that.

In CHAPTER 4 *Feminist Epistemology for Feminist Policy Making and Policy Analysis*, We scrutinize with the theoretical background of Advocacy Coalition Framework on how

the waves of feminism and hashtags in particular were instrumental in contributing towards feminist public policies. In the policy analysis part, we look into how the feminist policies make women visible in feminist public policies. Responsible interventions into epistemic practices by public policy making can help move society in the direction of social justice. Hashtag testimony leads to consciousness raising and protest movements which in turn leads to the public reasoning and policy that empowers women.

General Conclusion

Hashtag feminism demonstrates the capacity to restructure social realities in new ways. It helps women to come out of the limitations of being a feminist and it gives importance to the production of knowledge from the everyday experiences of women. Woman who was excluded from the context of knowledge produces outstanding philosophical knowledge through the non-traditional format of hashtag. Philosophical explorations into it contribute to the theory of knowledge, especially feminist epistemology.

CHAPTER 1

AN EXPEDITION INTO THE WAVES OF FEMINISM

Introduction

There are different ways of studying and researching into the feminist studies. One among them is wave analogy. There is a perceptible pattern of rise and fall in the oscillation of the waves. The crest and the conduit of the feminist movement are featured as preceding the stirring of tidal water with its systematic swelling, subsequent cresting and culminating subsiding.¹ Wave analogy presents the different phases the feminist movement has undergone in the history with its distinctive details.² In this chapter, we explore into the facets of waves of feminism with an emphasis on the key propositions of each stage and bring forward a representative author of each stage in order to investigate into the hashtag.

1.1 First Wave Feminism

First wave feminism began in late 19th and early 20th century. By and large, it focused on women's suffrage, better working conditions, right to education and promotion of equal contract and property rights. Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Candy Stanton, Margaret Sanger and Anna Howard Shaw were some of the leading figures of the movement.

¹ Pilcher & Whelhan, *Key Concepts in Gender Studies*, 166.

² The wave is a metaphor for generational relationships, but for the purpose of feminist history it is also a metaphor for mother-daughter relationships. See Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism*, 26.

1.1.1 *Ain't I a Woman?*

In 1851, at the Ohio Women's Right Convention, Sojourner Truth challenges the prevailing myth that women are weaker than men and the social definitions of womanhood. She does it by repeating the proposition *ain't I a woman?* and by offering commentary to it from her life experiences. By repeating *ain't I woman*, Sojourner Truth affirms her right to equality with men.³ She invites the men to look at her and her hardworking hands that ploughed and planted and gathered into barns and challenges them that they won't be able to conquer her in manual labour. She presents before her audience the grievances she suffered as a woman. The injustices and violence she underwent had excruciating emotional and physical effects upon her. She cries out: "I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me."⁴ She inspires the audience for working together to attain equality for all. She presents Eve as the first woman who turned the world upside down all alone and exhorts the audience to stand as one in order to get the world into the right track. She anchors on the theme of equality by referring to the Biblical vision on human beings, human beings as created in the image and likeness of God. She asserts of the power of women stating that it was a woman who gave birth to God, Christ.

1.1.2 *A Room of One's Own*

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*⁵ could be considered as an answer to the concerns raised by Sojourner Truth. One of the arguments of the book is that

³ Perry, *Analysis of Ain't I Woman?*, 3.

⁴ Truth, *Ain't I woman?*,

⁵ While Bennett claims that it is not at all a feminist work but simply a study of men and women, Daiches does believe that Woolf's essay is feminist. See *The Scope of Woolf's Feminism in A Room of One's Own*

women are victims of themselves by acting as mirrors to men.⁶ As Sojourner Truth, Woolf wonders at the effect of poverty on the mind of the woman in chapter 1. She underlines the necessity of having a special and separate space for women.⁷ Had the women belonged to high class families, only then they had an entry to their own particular space. In the words of Woolf, women are denied the space even to think about themselves. To create a better future, she exhorts her audience not to be complacent and to fight for equal rights with men. Woolf asserts the rights of the women to be educated and independent. For that she suggests a room of their own to write in.

1.2 Second Wave Feminism

The period between 1960-1980 is considered as the timeframe for second wave. It was concerned with different issues associated with equality. Feminists reflected over the inequalities as that having connection between the cultural and political elements. They focused on the goals of equal rights and social dependence for women.⁸ They helped the women to recognize the deeply politicized personal lives of other women. The second wave feminist conscientized⁹ the women on the power structures that played a great role in politicizing their personal lives.

⁶ Ameer, *She in the "He-World,"* 19.

⁷ "Indeed, if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance; very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some think even greater. But this is woman in fiction. In fact, as Professor Trevelyan points out, she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room. A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history." See Wolf, *A Room of One's Own*, p. 43.

⁸ Ameer, *She in the He World*, 22.

⁹ For example, The Red Stockings encouraged groups of women to gather for consciousness raising discussions, which involved sharing their personal experiences in the feminist struggles. Through consciousness raising woman could identify herself in common struggles and receive support while feminism grew into mass movement.

Feminist thinkers like Simon De Beauvoir, Betty Freidan, Shulamith Firestone, Luce Irigaray, Helen Cixous, Elaine Showalter, Julia Kristeva, etc., belong to the second wave feminism.

1.2.1 “Personal is Political”

The origin of the phrase, Personal is Political, is unidentified.¹⁰ The phrase means that political and personal issues influence each other. It also suggests that the experience of women which is the foundation of feminism is both personal and political. It could be also considered as a tool for generating feminist theory. One can begin with personal experiences and reach to the larger systematic complications. The problems seemed to be individual and silly are in fact systemic and political.

The expression “personal is political” was hyped by Carol Hanisch. According to her, personal experiences of women can be discovered in the power relationships that exist in the society. Her essay states that the personal realization on the bleak state of women is significant in committing oneself to the political action.

1.2.2 “The Problem that has no Name”

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Freidan presents her personal experiences along with the experiences of other women. She was a dedicated wife and mother who cared for her family and loved the members of her family. Though she had financial and worldly

¹⁰ Feminist and writer Carol Hanisch's essay titled "The Personal is Political" appeared in the anthology *Notes From the Second Year: Women's Liberation* in 1970. She is therefore often credited with creating the phrase. However, she wrote in an introduction to the 2006 republication of the essay that she did not come up with the title. She believed "The Personal Is Political" was selected by the editors of the anthology, Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt, who were both feminists involved with the group New York Radical Feminists. Some feminist scholars have noted that by the time the anthology was published in 1970, "the personal is political" had already become a widely used part of the women's movement and was not a quote attributable to any one person.

securities, she felt a kind of hollowness within her. From this dissatisfaction and incompleteness she began her search into the life of other women who leads family life. She wanted to know whether they are really happy in their life. Her research revealed to her that very many educated women lead exasperated lives in their family. They were fed up with fatigue and frustration. These feelings were considered as unhealthy by the women as well as the members of the society. This irritated her and the persisting problem was termed by her as the “problem that has no name.” The women who were analyzed by Freidan were lucky to have the benefits of education and well-paid off jobs. However, everyone suffers the ‘problem that has no name’ which is their inability to adjust to their narrow sphere of existence. In the words of Whelehan, problem that has no name stands for the alienation felt among US housewives dehumanized by the boredom of domestic labour.¹¹

1.2.3 Elaine Showalter and Gynocriticism

Elaine Showalter, as an important writer of the second wave feminism, emphasized the necessity of developing women’s own literary history. Through her works, she presents the concept of Gynocriticism. Gynocriticism refers to the literary study of women as writers.¹² She arranged the history into three phases: feminine, feminist and female.¹³ Feminine is the period between 1840-1880 in which women writers imitated men. Feminist is the decades between 1880-1920 when writers made political protests part of their writing. Female is the period from 1920 to the present in which women’s

¹¹ Whelehan, *Modern Feminist Thought*, 9.

¹² Griffin, “The Common Threads of Gynocriticism,” 373.

¹³ According to Peter Barry, the concern with conditioning and socialization underpins a crucial set of distinctions that between the terms feminist, female and feminine. The first is a political position, the second a matter of biology and the third a set of culturally defined characteristics. See Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 117.

writings involves itself in self-transformation. Showalter presents gynocritics¹⁴ as a way to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience.

1.3 Third Wave Feminism

Third wave¹⁵ began in early 1990s. It was a response to the failures of the second wave. It honors contradictory experiences and deconstruct categorical thinking.¹⁶ Intersectionality is one of the key concerns of third wave feminists. It acknowledges the diversity of women and prominence is given to gender, race, identity, social order and social preferences. It emphasizes on the condition of women in the third world countries. The third wave feminists challenge the second wave feminists for not considering the contexts of lower class women, minorities and women living in other cultural situations. Third wave recognizes deeper level of oppression than that of equal rights and opportunities.¹⁷ Rebecca Walker coined the term Third Wave feminism. She motivated and encouraged the young women to join their mothers and cling to feminism as their cause for growth.

¹⁴ According to Barry, gynocriticism is a broad and varied field, and any generalizations about it should be treated with caution. Because the subjects of gynocriticism are the history, styles, themes, genres and structures of writing by women. [Ibid, 118].

¹⁵ Third wave feminism is a contested concept. It can refer to the generational difference between young feminists activists and older feminists who were active in the second wave, a political critique of second wave feminism and a distancing from it. See Robinson & Richardson, *Introducing Gender and Women Studies*, 41.

¹⁶ Krollokke and Sorensen, *Gender Communication Theories and Analyses: From Silence to Performance*, 16.

¹⁷ Ameer, *She in the "He -World"*, 47.

1.3.1 “Girl Power”

Girl Power was the key slogan of Riot Grrrls that arose in the context of third wave feminism. Riot Grrrls stood against the capitalistic¹⁸ and consumerist ideologies of the society and raised their voices against the patriarchy that controlled the society. Creative elements of music and do-it-yourself axiom were the strong elements of the movement. Capitalism always commodified the existence of woman with the consumerist instincts.¹⁹ One of the predominant ways through which the Girl Power Movement expressed its views on important issues concerning woman was through music.

1.3.2 *Girl Power Manifesto*

One of the strategies of Hanna’s *Girl Power Manifesto* was to bring forth materials that strengthen the female. The *Manifesto* looks for books in which women are included.²⁰ It wants books that speak to women and help the women to understand their ways better. It upholds the interest of young women to see the works of each other and to make use of writing as a space where they can share their blueprints and reviews to each other. They want to enter into the world of writing to create their own meanings or in other terms, they look for having a control over the means of production. They want to consider their works as a link that establishes rapport among them and as a weapon that challenges the existing normalcy in the society.

¹⁸ Kathleen Hanna, the front woman of the Riot Grrrl band Bikini Kill, explicitly defined the mindsets and characteristics of a Riot Grrrl in her “Riot Grrrl Manifesto,” published in 1991 in Bikini Kill Zine 2, one of the short, homemade publications used to promote Riot Grrrl ideology. Hanna pitted Riot Grrrls against dominant American culture: “BECAUSE we hate capitalism in all its forms and see our main goal as sharing information and staying alive, instead of making profits of being cool according to traditional standards.” Hanna further described Riot Grrrls as “seek[ing] to create revolution in [their] own lives every single day by envisioning and creating alternatives to the bullshit Christian capitalist way of doing things.” Through their actions and group identity, Riot Grrrls worked against “racism, able-bodiedism, ageism, speciesism, classism, thinism, sexism, anti-semitism and heterosexism.”

¹⁹ Wright, “Do-It-Yourself Girl Power – An Examination of the Riot Girl Subculture,” 52-56.

²⁰ Lusty, “Riot Grrrl Manifestos and Radicular Vernacular Feminism,” 225.

1.3.4 Jessica Valenti and *Feministing* Blog

Jessica Valenti together with her sister Vanessa Valenti founded the blog *feministing* in 2004. Their initiatives laid foundations for online feminism and they made use of online in order to conduct discussions and campaigns around the world on the issues of women. In the words of Valenti, her intention behind *feministing* blog was to make sure the entry of young women into the world of feminism and to assure a place for them in the internet.²¹ It provided a platform for young feminists to raise their concerns and voices. Hossain mulls over it as a locus where one can get daily drench of feminist assessment on issues from the young feminine perspective.²²

1.4 Fourth Wave Feminism

Fourth wave feminism began in 2012. The key issues that are given attention in fourth wave feminism are rape culture and sexual harassment. The fourth wave group makes use of the social media to bring forth their concerns. It is considered as the first feminist uprising of the age of technology.²³ Providing a secure aperture for women to narrate their sexual harassment experiences was the intention behind the beginning of the website *Everyday Sexism* by Laura Bates in April 2012. Thousands of women reported their harassment experiences to the site and it generated its forms in 25 countries. Diversity is one of the perspicuous elements of the fourth wave feminism. Each group owns particular hashtag, memes and campaigns to raise

²¹ Yakovelva, "Inside Feministing: Jessica Valenti's Platform for Young Feminists," accessed on November, 26, 2019, <http://yonah.org/channel/feministing-jessica-valenti>.

²² Hossain, "Feminism 2.0: How Jessica Valenti is Changing the Conversation," accessed on November 26, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/worldviews/2012/07/19/feminism-2-0-how-jessica-valenti-changed-the-game-for-women/#5e0e97b16e8f>.

²³ Clarke, "Stuck on the Third: A Guide to Fourth Wave Feminism," accessed on November 26, 2019, <https://futurewomen.com/leadership/gender-diversity/fourth-wave-feminism-guide/>

their demands. In the words of Kira Cochrane,²⁴ fourth wave feminism is represented by technology and stamped by the use of Face book, Twitter, Instagram, You tube, Tumblr to object to the discriminations. Kira Cochrane, Jennifer Baumgardner, Rebecca Solnit are some of the important fourth wave feminist thinkers.

1.4.1 Rebecca Solnit and *The Mother of All Questions*

One of the underlying themes of *The Mother of All Questions* is that when the world listens to the stories of women then the world adapts a different way to deal with women. Therefore she encourages presenting as many stories one can. She proposes for story telling as there have been innumerable ways of silencing²⁵ women throughout the history.²⁶ Story telling has great power. The presenter and contents of a story form the society that listens to the story and forwards the calculations to the members of the society.²⁷ In *The Mother of All Questions*, Solnit conforms to storytelling through which she presents examples²⁸ of the injustices suffered by female and the male assaults on the female.

²⁴ Cochrane, “The Fourth Wave of Feminism: Meet the Rebel Women,” *The Guardian*, December 10, 2013, Archived from the original on 14 December 2019.

²⁵ In “A Short History of Silence,” Solnit deals with the importance of having a voice and the injustice, harm of being silenced and the possibility of breaking through silence. According to her, silence exists as an institutional imposition and works to maintain itself in power. She enumerates many cases in which women were abused and then denied their voices, but then she ends by recounting how the feminist movement has been able to reclaim a space for women’s voices and shatter the silence they have suffered under

²⁶ Moira, “Rebecca Solnit’s Faith in Story Telling,” *The New Yorker*, April 5, 2017.

²⁷ In “80 Books No Woman Should Read” and a follow-up essay “Men Explain Lolita to Me,” Solnit deals with the problem of misogyny in literature. She argues that it is harmful not only to women but also to men to read stories in which women are degraded; women would lose their sense of self-worth, and men would feel empower to take abused women.

²⁸ She talks about the young student at Bard College who was forced to sign a nondisclosure agreement before the school would allow her even to report her rape; she talks about Elliot Rodger, the man who committed a mass shooting, in 2014, because he was mad that women declined to sleep with him.

1.4.2 Jennifer Baumgardner and *Women's Review of Books*

Jennifer Baumgardner is the chief Editor of Women's Review of Books. According to her, WRB offers a platform for women writers who are critics and writers. With the activities of WRB, feminist voices are not marginalized categorically.²⁹ WRB promotes the values pertaining to feminist culture intensified by the writings of female authors. Feminist writers, according to Baumgardner, feel to be part of it and consider WRB as an investment. She clarifies clearly on what is the necessity of writing about women's writing.

1.4.3 Hashtag and Hashtag Feminism

A hashtag is the pound sign or the sharp note in musical notation. In the contemporary society, the use of hashtag helps in the social networks to find messages with a particular theme and content. Social media makes use of hashtag to draw attention, to arrange and to accelerate particular messages. Hashtag increases the chances of being found, it becomes a link to search queries, and one can reveal one's personality through the hashtag that will help the person to engage or disengage with an audience.

From a feminist perspective, hashtag are considered as fourth wave feminism or online feminism. It has created a virtual space for personal narratives. According to Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy defines hashtag feminism as an intellectual and political commitment towards attaining justice for women barring every form of sexism. It includes normative and descriptive components of feminism.³⁰ The normative claims how the women should be viewed and treated and the descriptive claims how they are

²⁹ Baumgardner, "Q&A with Jennifer Baumgardner Editor in Chief of the Women's Review of Books," interview by Sitara Zoberi, *Women Change Worlds*, April 5, 2018.

³⁰ Dixon, "Feminist Online Identity," 145-47.

viewed and treated are represented well in hashtag. Hashtag is a way of sharing one's own narrative and as a result it creates personal narrative group. Feminist hashtag is a platform where we can listen to their voice and learn from their experiences. It starts with superficial and public information and slowly it progresses towards sharing one's own feelings that leads to reveal one's own goals and ambitions. It's a constant process of showing one's own identity and inner self.

As a result of the exposure of the personal through the hashtag, women are able to form a virtual community to self identity and to forge identities that are greater than the society has forced upon them.

1.4.3.1 Important Feminist Hashtags

The cyber space has witnessed to a good number of hashtags that were significant to the feminist thought.³¹ #Fem2 (2008), #MooreAndMe (2010), #GirlsLikeUs (2012), #FlushRushNow (2012), #Bindersfullofwomen (2012), #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen (2013), #NotYourAsianSidekick (2013), #BlackGirlMagic (2013), #MasculinitySoFragile (2013), #PrettyPeriod (2014), #WhyIStayed (2014), #BringBackOurGirls (2014), #RapeCultureIsWhen (2014), #YesAllWomen (2014), AllMenCan (2014), #Hobbylobby (2014), #YouOkSis (2014), #AddWomen (2015), #ToTheGirls (2015), #EverydaySexism (2015), #EffYourBeautyStandards (2015), etc., are some of the famous hashtags of the time.

³¹ Blay, "21 Hashtags that changed the Way We Talk About Feminism," accessed on 26 November 2019, https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/21-hashtags-that-changed-the-way-we-talk-about-feminism_n_56ec0978e4b084c6722000d1?ri18n=true.

1.4.3.2 Significance of Hashtags for Feminism

Hashtags are useful to elucidate and engross others on feminism in their own words. Dixon opines that “we are facing a new wave of feminism via hash tagging.”³² The ideas that are shared in hashtags are the experience of the people in their own contexts. It has constructed consensus among individuals and groups through the list of new followers and new friendships. As a result, the members that follow a particular tagging feel a sense of rapport among them. People who follow particular hashtags are exposed to newer and newer ideas.

1.4.3.3 Hashtag Feminism in Comparison with other Waves of Feminism

When we compare the first three waves of feminism with the fourth wave, we understand that the typical slogans of each stage summarized the key issue of the time. In the fourth wave we have good number of hashtags that addresses different issues concerning women. However, slogans of the first three waves of feminism and the hashtags share certain common elements.

1.4.3.3.1 Acknowledgment of Pain of Women

Following the strategies of the feminists of the other waves, Hashtags also become a medium for recognizing the importance of the pain suffered by women. The hashtag, #RapeCultureIsWhen, which was created by Zerlina Maxwell in order to bring to light the plight of the victims of rape. Many a time the world blames the victim for no fault of her own. The hashtag provided a space for the victims of rape to share their tragedy so that the world may be conscious of their pain. Acknowledging acts of violence is an

³² Dixon, “Feminist Online Identity: Analysing the Presence of Hashtag Feminism,” 34.

important step to end gendered violence.³³ It sheds light into the fact that violence as a gendered issue is closely related to the patriarchal systems of subordination.

1.4.3.3.2 A Platform to Share Experiences

Through the slogans of the previous years, the feminists were sharing their experiences. Hashtags continued the same line of sharing experiences of feminist concerns. For example, #EverydaySexism that was started by Laura Bates motivated women to present their stories in order to endorse issues related to gender equality. A good number of women made use of #EverydaySexism as a platform to share their experiences. As a result, the society became conscious of the issues and solidarity was brought in among the women who shared their experiences.

1.4.3.3.3 Demand for a Just Society for Women

Through the thought provoking propositions of the other waves, the feminists were demanding a just society for women. The thirst for just society for women is evident in hashtags too. For example, the hashtag #AddWomen accentuates the need for more women to be included in the realm of mechanics, manufacturing and information technology.

1.4.3.3.4 Consciousness Raising

Consciousness raising is a tool for transforming personal perils into political propaganda. The slogans of first three waves of feminism transformed women's sense of their experience as personal into something collectively experienced and organized structurally. This phenomenon is evident in hashtags too. For example, the hashtag

³³ Abrams, *The Feminist Case of Acknowledging Women's Acts of Violence*, 289.

#HeForShe by Hollywood star Emma Watson motivated men to be staunch supporters of feminism. It called forth the attention of men to try for gender equality and to avoid domestic violence. As a result, celebrities like Peter Gallagher, Mathew Lewis, Harry Styles, Douglas Booth came extended their support and presence in the consciousness raising campaign.

1.5 Feminist Philosophical Perspective of Miranda Fricker

One of the concerns of Miranda Fricker is that how can one bring feminist concerns on philosophy³⁴ not by replacing philosophy with feminism or by considering feminism as a separate part of philosophy. It looks for philosophy informed by feminism. Feminism has different types of significance as it has the effect on different philosophical subject areas. One of her interest in that line is associated with epistemology, with the notion of silence.

1.5.1 Negative and Positive Silence

Fricker introduces the concept of negative and positive silence and presents the negative silence as the imposed silence and positive silence as the attentive silence.³⁵ In negative silence barriers are placed on people so that their voices are not heard where as in positive silence, there is the presence of people who are listening to the voice that are hardly heard. The double aspect of silence is present in feminist hashtags. Listening to silence is advantageous as it will offer a pathway to philosophize.³⁶ Can we gain knowledge from the silenced, the powerless? If we do not

³⁴ Fricker, *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy*, 1.

³⁵ Fricker, "Silence and Institutional Prejudice," 1.

³⁶ Fricker, "Silence and Institutional Prejudice," 3.

stand at the side of the oppressed and empathize with them, according to Fricker, we can't understand them. When we decide to stand with them we need to have critical openness. Critical openness is the capacity to listen to others with a special attention.³⁷

Hashtags could be seen as the attempt from the part of the human person whose voice was blocked by the society. The interest in feminist hashtag can be considered as a practice of active listening by people to the voice that are silenced. In doing that, the one who listens to the hashtags sympathetically sides with the oppressed with a special attention. This causes a pathway, a feminist pathway to philosophy.

1.5.2 Necessity of Epistemology for Feminist Philosophy

According to Fricker, an understanding of the knowing subject as a social being brings in a change in epistemology.³⁸ In such a treatment, testimony becomes an important source of gaining knowledge. Moreover, it gives sufficient care to the epistemic practices and interpersonal relationship between the knowers. Attentiveness to the daily epistemic practices display also the political aspects involved in the production of knowledge. Social difference paves way to the epistemic difference which deals with the theme on how women are kept out by certain notions of knowledge. Fricker emphasizes the fact that one of the core concepts of feminist philosophy is to respect the difference by handling the subject.³⁹ It will help the subject to represent as socially situated in different aspects.

³⁷ Fricker, "Silence and Institutional Prejudice," 9.

³⁸ Fricker, *Introduction to the Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy*, 7.

³⁹ Fricker, *Introduction to the Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy*, 6.

Hashtag is a quotidian practice of fourth wave feminists. Most of the feminist hashtags function as testimony. They also build up interpersonal relationship among the hashtag group.

Conclusion

Hashtags could be seen as the contemporary version of the slogans which were raised by feminists of each wave. In the first three waves we don't have a variety of the feminist slogans whereas in the fourth wave there are multiple slogans in the forms of hashtag that addresses the issues concerning women. Secondly, every representative writer of the first three waves spoke for having a space for women so that they can write their concerns. Towards the end of third wave and in fourth wave particularly, we see the feminists make use of cyber space as an area where they write and address their concern. Online feminist activism has forced the issues that are ignored by the mainstream into the forefront. The use of cyber space gave them better receptivity and larger audience. It amplified the messages and connected the feminists of different corners of the world. Moreover, it became a source of knowledge production. We look into that aspect of knowledge production in the second chapter.

CHAPTER 2

AN EXAMINATION INTO THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF WAVES OF FEMINISM

Introduction

Epistemology looks into the nature and conditions of knowledge. Feminists are more interested in knowing women's experiences and the circumstances of their lives and their innuendos for society. They reveal how women are left out as knowers and known. They believe an exploration into the experiences of women will help them in analyzing the nature and position of knowers and the gendered politics of knowledge. Experiences of women are significant in feminist standpoint epistemology and feminist empiricist epistemology. Our analysis of the history of the waves of feminism has helped us to know the significance of feminist lived experiences in feminist history and feminist philosophy.

Two relevant epistemological thesis of Standpoint theory are situated knowledge thesis and epistemic advantage thesis are based on experience. The situated knowledge thesis endorses that our experiences are systematically influenced and shaped by social locations and it restricts what we know. As a result, knowledge is achieved from a particular stand point. The thesis of epistemic advantage confirms that some standpoints, standpoints of relegated and repressed are epistemically powerful and privileged. These two theses are also significant for the feminist empiricists.

Feminist standpoint school and feminist empiricist school give priority to experience to endorse epistemology. When we are aware of something we say we have an experience of that thing. Experience is experience of something that exists.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Kaipayil, *Critical Ontology*, 7.

Philosophy is critical reflection on human experience in the light of which one formulate a world view that enables him to give a coherent explanation.⁴¹ Reality is given to us in our experience of it and a philosopher ruminates on his diverse experiences and forms a world-vision. The study of experience in its relation to philosophy shows an emerging trend toward a world-philosophy in which the human experience of life and world constitute a unifying point.⁴²

Here in this chapter we will be analyzing the notion of experience on the basis of situated knowledge thesis and epistemic advantage thesis in order to explore into feminist hashtags. For our exploration into feminist hashtags, we will be looking into #RapeCultureIsWhen. We wind up the chapter by making an evaluation on the basis of the ideas of Miranda Fricker on power and epistemic justice.

2. 1 Situated Knowledge Thesis

Social position has a role in forming and restricting what one knows as it has an effect on the experience one has. People from different social spots have distinct experiences. This leads the Standpoint theorists to present knowledge as embodied. Different human beings when they are exposed to distinct earthly conditions, it will bring in distinct experiences, belief and evidences. Social locations never shape experience in an equivalent manner. The distinct experiences of diverse whereabouts give human beings ingress to typical evidences. Thus standpoint theorists assert that knowledge is gained from particular stand point.

Critical reflection has an important place in the doctrines of eminent feminist standpoint theorists. According to Sandra Harding, standpoint presents “a distinctive

⁴¹ Kaipayil, *Epistemology of Comparative Philosophy*, 94.

⁴² Kachappilly, “Experience and Philosophy,” 149.

insight about how a hierarchical social structure works.”⁴³ Wylie Presents standpoint as “a critical consciousness about the nature of our social location and the difference it makes epistemically.”⁴⁴ In the words of Intemann, “Standpoints are achieved through a critical, conscious reflection on the ways in which power structures and resulting social locations influence knowledge production.”⁴⁵ These reflections help us to hold that standpoint is realized through critical awareness on how power play in forming and curbing the knowledge. Standpoints are not merely the products of certain social spots but standpoints are realized through critical reflections on power structures that influences knowledge in particular setting.

An experience of an individual has significant role in attaining critical consciousness within an epistemic community as it help the group to figure out their experiences and how domineering structures form and check the knowledge. The very fact that the rationalization of the experience is not by individuals but by the group leads feminist epistemology into the level of social epistemology.

The standpoint views make clear commitment. Sandra Harding states that a standpoint “intends to map the practices of power, the ways the dominant institutions and their conceptual frameworks create and maintain oppressive social relations.”⁴⁶ It looks for divulging the systems of domineering that hinders knowledge production. It is committed to explore how gender plays the role in framing and fracturing knowledge. It studies the policies and practices that pave way for oppressive structures.

⁴³ Harding, “A Socially Relevant Philosophy of Science? Resources from Standpoint Theory’s Controversiality,” 31.

⁴⁴ Wylie, “Why standpoint matters,” 31.

⁴⁵ Intemann, “25 Years of Feminist Empiricism and Standpoint Theory: Where Are We Now?,” 785.

⁴⁶ Harding, “A Socially Relevant Philosophy of Science? Resources from Standpoint Theory’s Controversiality,” 42.

2.1.1 Situated Knowledge Thesis in First Wave Feminism

In the first wave feminism slogan of Sojourner Truth, *ain't I a woman?*, she brings forward examples from her own life to represent new meanings. When she quotes the verbal jabbering of male dominant society that “women need to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches and have the best place every where followed by her personal experience that “nobody ever helps me into carriages or over mud-puddles or gives the best place,” she brings forth the hypocrisy of the society that stresses woman should be treated with politeness. When she asserts “borne thirteen children and seen most all sold off to slavery and cried with mother’s grief,” she presents her personal distress and destitution she had to undergo because she was a woman.

The elements of situated knowledge thesis are evident in the speech of Sojourner Truth. Her speech socially situated in the background of slavery system existed in USA. Her words not only presents a critical observation on what was going on in the society but also functions as powerful tool of consciousness raising. Her meeting with women rights activists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Stanton and other temperance activists promoted a joint commitment and as a result she delivered the famous speech *Ain't I Woman?* at Women’s Rights Conference at Ohio in 1851.

2.1.2 Situated Knowledge Thesis in Second Wave Feminism

In *Feminine Mystique*, Freidan demonstrates the blind adjustments of women in order to present themselves as just housewives. In reality, their personal experiences are like the experiences of those who were kept in Nazi concentration camps. The attitude of the society towards it is equal to those people who never believed concentration camps existed in Germany until they witnessed to the reality. She also proved that those 28 women who were analyzed by her were not supporting the joyful image the society

had attributed to woman as a whole. If they had the personal experience of joy, they would not have attempted for suicide or became the victims of depression.⁴⁷

The components of situated knowledge thesis is visible in second wave feminism as Freidan's critical reflections triggered consciousness raising and political campaigns for the legal equality of women with men. "The problem that had no name" brought to light the covert subjugations suffered by housewives and mothers and their lack of fulfillment in their lives. As a sign of joint commitment, Freidan founded National Organization for Women that fought for the legal rights for women.

2.1.3 Situated Knowledge Thesis in Third Wave Feminism

One of the main reasons behind the trend of Grrrl power is the hegemonic gender representation of the popular culture.⁴⁸ The lived experience of the young women and the teenage girls of the third wave were that they are considered as the symbols of consumption not of production. They felt that the culture, especially the music industry, has given the terrain of production to the male. It is from this recognition of the lived experience the members of the Riot Grrrl started to bring out texts and music through which they spread the knowledge about themselves. It resulted in challenging the dominant representations on girls by patriarchy and producing their own self-representation of Riot Grrrl. They also felt that feminism as such has marginalized the experiences and longings of young women and girls. The Riot Grrrl did not only

⁴⁷ Feminist theorist Bell Hooks notes that Freidan wrote as if working class women and women of colour did not exist making her plight and the plight of white women like herself synonymous with a condition affecting all American woman. See Hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to the Centre*, 1-3.

⁴⁸ Munford, "'Wake Up and Smell the Lipgloss': Gender, Generation and the (A)politics of Girl Power", 144-45.

protest against the universalizing attitude of feminism⁴⁹ but also deplored the misrepresentations of patriarchal childhood by adapting a youth culture.⁵⁰

The integrants of situated knowledge thesis are evident in third wave feminism too.

2.1.4 Situated Knowledge Thesis in Fourth Wave Feminism

Scarlet Pollock and Jo Sutton⁵¹ considers the internet as an extension of the ways of linking upholds the ideals of dialogue, encouraging others, sharing, dealing with difficulties which are common to a feminist community. In the words of Dale Spender⁵², internet has the power to provide untold opportunities for communication, exchange and keeping in touch. It gives ample occasions to enter into a dialogue.

2.1.4.1 Procedures of Connected Knowing

Emergence of knowledge from personal experience is the foundation of connected knowing. It considers the knowledge from personal experience as the reliable knowledge. The way to comprehend the perception of someone is sharing the experience. Belenky et. al. proposes five procedures that are there in connected

⁴⁹ According to Shelly Budgeon, “the consequences of generational difference for a unified feminist movement are often framed within the context of an antagonistic relationship between younger and older women in which references are made to “bad daughters” and “lifestyle” feminists vs “victim” feminism’. See Budgeon, “Emergent Feminist(?) Identities: Young Women and the Practice of Micropolitics”, 7–20.

⁵⁰ Munford, “ ‘Wake Up and Smell the Lipgloss’: Gender, Generation and the (A)politics of Girl Power”, 144.

⁵¹ Pollock & Jo. “Women Click: Feminism and the Internet.’ *CyberFeminism: Connectivity, Critique and Creativity*,” 33–50.

⁵² Spender, *Nattering on the Net: Women, Power and Cyberspace*. 229.

knowing.⁵³ They are: i) Linked Discourse, ii) Candid Sharing, iii) Dismissal of Assessment, iv) Associating in Linked Groups and v) Exercising Personal Knowledge.

Linked discourse is an intimate and informal exercise. It does not follow impersonal mannerism and structured rules. It stresses the aspect of listening as it believes by listening one can understand what the other feel. By expressing the empathetic feeling towards the other, the listener enlarges one's experience base and knowledge.

Candid Sharing indicates that the conversation that takes place between women is not on impenetrable matters. Sharing small truths includes the direct talk about one's own feelings and about others. One cannot write it off as hearsay. If we consider it as a response it will aid the epistemic aspect as observational and informational elements are included in the sharing.

Dismissal of Assessment arises from the value of trust. Behind any opinion experience is present and no one can call someone else's experience as wrong. Nonjudgmental attitude is natural to women and though they are able to make ethical judgment on others, they don't enforce it upon others. They prefer to look at it from the perspective of the person than arguing over it.

Associating in linked groups stands for meeting in groups in order to share what one feels to be nurtured by the others. Members of the group have to develop the habit of knowing and trusting each other. This approach will make the members to be

⁵³ They are: i) Conversing in the Connected Mode, ii) Sharing Small Truths, iii) Refusing to judge, iv) Collaborating in Connected Knowing Group and v) Using Personal Knowledge. See Belenky, "Procedural Knowledge: Separate and Connected Knowing," 235-247.

connected while they engage themselves in the group activities. Collaboration does not close the aspect of criticism rather it is open to criticism as the members of the group share indistinguishable incidents.

Exercising personal knowledge stresses to do whatever they feel as right to them. Those who function on authoritative knowledge know what someone should be doing without respecting what is going on with the person concerned. When one pursue the path of personal knowledge, s/he makes it one's responsibility to help the other who is undergoing a difficulty respecting the person's feeling.

2.1.4.2 Procedures of Connected Knowing in #RapeCultureIsWhen

#RapeCultureIsWhen is a hashtag made by Zerlina Maxwell in 2014. The intention behind creating the hashtag was to bring the attention of the world to the victims of rape. When Zerlina tweeted on September 18, 2018 that rape culture is when people question women's choices and not the choices of man who has committed a rape, we see immediate tweets from different parts of the world conversing in the connected mode. They listen to each other and believe each other and express their empathetic feelings to each other. For example the empathetic feelings are expressed by Amanda Harrington on May 6, 2019 stating that it was an honor for her to present a life time award to Zerlina for breaking the silence in telling her narrative. She affirms that such silence breaking has the power to dismantle rape culture with one's own seismic call to action. It was also an encouragement for taking the lead role for the survivors of victims. There are people like Caroline Heldman who shares their own information and observation regarding the matter under consideration. She informs that *rape culture is when* dozens of priests in Colorado get away with sexually abusing 166+Children over a 70 years period. Later she comes up with the information that *rape culture is when* not a single perpetrator is held accountable for the rapes of 10

high school athletes at La Vernia High School. When Abbey Honold tweets that in a week there is at least a victim of sexual violence who comes to her for help, she wishes a change in the mind set from the part of the people. Rbiggs thanks Abbey Honold for the generous and grateful support she received from Honold.

We see here how the components of connected epistemology function here when people make use of hashtags. It agrees with the notion that knowledge is communally acquired, corroborated and elaborated.⁵⁴

2.1.4.3 Situated Knowledge Thesis in #RapeCultureIsWhen

Feminist epistemologists consider different sides of the social aspects of inquiry when they analyze how gendered power relations affect practices of knowing. They are interested in bringing forth how one can know well under the yoke of oppression. Many a times their explorations were of little use in understanding how to acquire well under conditions of oppressions.⁵⁵ It's here feminist hashtags become a model aid that assist in developing models of inquiry. With the help of it, one is able to analyze the epistemic contexts characterized by oppression. When Zerina Maxwell tweets on March 25, 2014 that “#Rapecultureiswhen survivors blame themselves and stay silent for fear that we will blame them...which we promptly do” and again when she tweets that #RapeCultureiswhen people question the woman's choices not the choices of a man who may have committed a rape”, these reveal how the oppressive structures are predominant in the contemporary society. It is so oppressive that mute the oppressed forever.

⁵⁴ Code, “Epistemology,” 179.

⁵⁵ Grasswick, “Feminist Responsibility, Situationism and Trust,” 218.

Hashtags help in conducting and evaluating inquiry and monitor the activities involved in our inquiries. As a result, feminist epistemologists develop a particular kind of knowing that analyze and understand social relations through the medium of hashtag. Through the medium of hashtag, they focus on analyzing specific challenges of gaining particular forms of knowledge and confront social injustices. For example, through the #RapeCultureIsWhen, they unveil how the thinking of the dominant groups favors the culture of rape. On March 26, 2014 When Zhara Tahira tweets #rapecultureiswhen a woman don't even know that she's been sexually assaulted because she's been trained to believe that it doesn't count, When Jamil Smith tweets "if you know anyone who still thinks rape culture doesn't exist point them to the #RapeCultureIsWhen conversation started and when Jillian Keenan tweets "#rapecultureiswhen a woman's story isn't reliable evidence, but a man's story is", they confront the social inequalities and the support of the powerful members of the society to the continuation of the culture of rape.

Hashtags take up the social situatedness of knowing into the realm of cyberspace. It becomes the area of cyberspace and affirms that one's possibilities for knowing depend on one's interaction with the members of the society through the mode of tagging.

Social situatedness of knowing leads feminist epistemologists to center their attention on the challenges of knowing across social locations.⁵⁶ The knowledge that is shared through the medium of hashtag comes from different social locations and therefore the social locations affect the interactions through tweeting. This differentiation of knowers according to social locations unveils the possibilities of those virtues that are

⁵⁶ Grasswick, "Feminist Responsibility, Situationism and Trust," 220.

required in the society. Accordingly, the medium of feminist hashtag becomes a space where one can learn which are the virtues that are to be developed in the society.

Feminist hashtags are a way of bringing one's own knowledge on empirical evidences. They help the feminists to engage effectively with the social, political and natural realities that form their situations and inform their experiences. They don't function like detached and neutral information processors. The model of evidence in feminist hashtag is self-announcing and knowers are ready to receive it.

When Kelly Moller on September 30, 2018 tweets that “#RapeCultureIsWhen a presidential candidate brags on tape of sexual assault yet gets elected anyway 2/2” it represents an aspect of rape culture in the society. Andrea Lohf shares the same concern when she tweets “RapeCultureIsWhen multiple women accuse a man of rape, but then he becomes the President of the United States anyway.

Situated Knowledges sustain strong bond to objectivity as it helps to see well. For Haraway, seeing well is a located activity. In situated knowledge-making projects, embodied knowers⁵⁷ engage with active objects of knowledge. Seeing-well does not validate the fact that everyone will see in the same way. Seeing-well as a located activity is aware of its uniqueness and of the demands accountability that are distinctive to the situation. Feminist hashtags support the projects of seeing well. Members of the hashtag group engage with different notions that are of concern to the feminists which enable them to see-well the themes under consideration. Feminist

⁵⁷ Donna Haraway argues that feminist attention to “situated knowledges” challenges the idea of a “disembodied scientific objectivity,” and she seeks a “doctrine of embodied objectivity that accommodates paradoxical and critical feminist science projects” (Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective”, 576, 581).

hashtags do the same exercise involved in situated knowledge. They look for generating the idea of objectivity that takes the existence of numerous notions and experiences about a particular matter as situated knowledge does.⁵⁸ Though it is a description of contingent and partial knowledge, feminist hashtags are interested in generating well-founded and reliable links with testimonies, experiences and positions located in a real and specific world.

Situated knowledge thesis is the idea that all knowledge is local and relative to a particular set of interests, values and beliefs that derive from a social location. Through hashtags, the members present themselves as located outside the dominant power structures. They present their marginalized positions through tweeting. The hashtags provide access to evidence which is not accessible to other researchers. As such, social location becomes relevant to the production of knowledge.⁵⁹

2.2 Epistemic Advantage Thesis

The Epistemic Advantage Thesis endorses the argument that the presence of members of the oppressed groups in epistemic communities has epistemic edge. Often, the experiences of members of the marginalized groups are not properly considered by scientific communities. When they are included in epistemic communities, it will lay the foundations for critical reflections as many of their experiences come from troublesome backgrounds. According to Wylie, the members of the marginalized groups simultaneously have to comprehend the slant of the supreme groups and they have their own experiences that squabble with the dominant ones and therefore they initiate a possible perspective on the way the world moves.

⁵⁸ Nightingale, "A Feminist in the Forest: Situated Knowledges and Mixing Methods in Natural Resource Management". 77-90.

⁵⁹ Crasnow, "Contemporary Standpoint Theory: Tensions, Integrations and Extensions," 192.

Inclusion of the members of subjugated groups with experiences is significant as it helps to produce new thesis and explanations. It will help in recognizing the troublesome background speculations. In order to attain particular standpoint, there should be responsive and reproofing reflection. Here too, the community has to participate in evaluative deliberations. The experience of those who are methodically ostracized can provide insights that can be inquired critically by the group.

2.2.1 Epistemic Advantage Thesis in First Wave Feminism

According to Sharlach, “The Declarations of Sentiments and Resolutions” by the first wave feminists was a demand that women should be listened to and acknowledged as individuals in their own right.⁶⁰ As response to it, there were critical reflections on it by the community. First Wave Feminist as a special oppressed group demanded the right to vote through critical reflection. The experience of the systematically excluded women provided insights into different vibrant themes. Some of them pointed out the principles of justice and equality for a favorable decision and others argued that women’s knowledge in housekeeping and moral superiority are sufficient to grant them the access to franchise. There were also a group of people who argued for the voting rights pointing out the ill treatment of the male towards the female. In order to be real moral leaders and good citizen, they demanded vote.

2.2.2 Epistemic advantage Thesis in Second Wave Feminism

One of the important organizations of the second wave feminism was NOW (National Organization for Women). The so called ‘special experience’ had a great role in the creation of it. The three special experiences of the marginalized of the second

⁶⁰ Sharlach, “First Wave Feminism,” accessed on December 5, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198073.wbierp0556>.

wave were: i) Sex-segregated “help wanted” ads, ii) Banning women from works seemed unsuitable for their nature and iii) firing or transferring flight attending women when they are married or reached 30s.⁶¹ One of the reasons for the employers to keep out women from jobs was motherhood. NOW argued that motherhood is not a long term duty. When the employers insisted that women are physically weak for manual jobs, NOW invited their attention into the fact the jobs of the post war times never required great strength. NOW encouraged women to publicize their difficulties and campaigned for Equal Rights Amendment. Thus in second wave feminism too we come across with dialectics evident in the epistemic agent thesis. The dominant members were not considering the experiences of those working women of second wave feminism. When NOW started to critically consider them, it could present a perspective of equality and consideration of women in the society.

2.2.3 Epistemic Advantage Thesis and Third Wave Feminism

During the time of third wave feminism, the younger feminists felt that their opinions were downgraded to youth culture and the community presented them as people lacking proper experience.⁶² The younger girls responded to it by establishing the Riot Grrrl movement. Through zines, they challenged the oppressive practices of the society.⁶³ For example, Carland’s zine, *I love My Army Carter*, testifies to queer intimacies and affect in the movement. Riot Grrrls made use of intimacy in order to form collective identity formation.

⁶¹ Sharlach, “Second Wave Feminism,” accessed on December 5, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198073.wbierp1323>.

⁶² Richards, “Third Wave Feminism,” accessed on December 5, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198073.wbierp1448>.

⁶³ Siegfried, “Feeling Collective: The Queer Politics of Affect in the Riot Grrrl Movement,” 21.

2.2.4 Epistemic Advantage Thesis in #RapeCultureIsWhen

#RapeCultureIsWhen testifies to the special experience and frustration of the survivors of rape. It unveils some of the attitudes of the dominant structure by tweeting, “#RapeCultureIsWhen society sees rapists as creeps in dark alley. Truth is we usually know our attackers. Friends, relatives, authorities” and “#RapeCultureIsWhen a rapist’s friends will condone the person’s actions by doing nothing even though they agree what they did was wrong.” When the dominant culture holds on to that there is no rape culture, the millions of responses in #RapeCultureIsWhen witness to the reality. Moreover, they help us to reflect into the reality that not only women are raped in the society, but also men and transgender are also suffering due to it.⁶⁴ Thus the hashtag moves beyond the category of a feminist hashtag. The experiences of the survivors underlie the fact that rape culture is real. The hashtag promoted studies into the disaster of rape. According to the studies⁶⁵, in every 107 seconds an American is sexually assaulted and in a year there are 293000 victims of sexual assault in the society. Out of 100 cases only 32 are reported to the police and out of 32, only 7 get arrested. The hashtag promoted to reflect on the damage rape causes to the nation and look deeper into the ways through which no citizen will normalize the culture of rape.

2.4 An Analysis of Hashtags through the Lenses of Miranda Fricker

Miranda Fricker enlightens us by narrating the role of power⁶⁶ in the situated epistemic thesis and the epistemic agent thesis.

⁶⁴ Paradise, “#RapeCultureIsWhen is the Perfect Answer to Everyone who Denies Rape,” accessed on November 26, 2019, <https://www.mic.com/articles/86187/rapecultureiswhen-is-the-perfect-answer-to-everyone-who-denies-rape>

⁶⁵ Martinez, “#RapeCultureIsWhen” In *The Expedition*, March 16, 2016.

⁶⁶ It is worth recalling the words of UN Secretary General, “from the ridiculing of women as hysterical and hormonal, to the routine judgement of women based on their looks; from the myths and taboos that surround women’s natural bodily functions, to mansplaining and victim blaming – misogyny is everywhere. At the heart of the issue is power, as male

2.4.1 Social Power

Power operates in the context of the functioning of a social world. Social power is a socially situated capacity to control the actions of others. This capacity of exercising control over others is either done by particular social agents or by the social structure. When social agents exercise power, there we see influence of one party over the other. It is an agential power as it is exercised through an agent. When power functions purely structurally we don't see a particular agent exercising it. In agential power, power has a subject where as in purely structural power it does not have a particular agent as subject but it always has an object that is being controlled. While power operates in social situatedness, one should have the willingness and courage to ask who and what is controlling whom and why.

In #Rapecultureiswhen, we have the explicit examples of how social power manifests exercise of power by social agents and social structures. In such occasions, hashtags become a courageous medium of seeking the answers for who is controlling whom and why the control over them is made.

2.4.2 Hermeneutical Marginalization⁶⁷

The idea of marginalization of Fricker indicates subordination and exclusion from some practice that would have value for the participant. The members of the disadvantaged group are hermeneutically marginalized in some important areas of social experiences. Hermeneutical marginalization is socially forced and it is a form of

dominated power structures underpin everything from national economies to political systems to the corporate world and beyond," (February 27, 2020).

⁶⁷ Fricker, "Powerlessness and Social Interpretation," 98-107.

powerlessness. A hermeneutically marginalized subject will not be able to generate meanings related to certain areas of the social life.

#Rapecultureiswhen underlines the aspect of hermeneutical marginalization. Feminine experiences under the hashtag #Rapecultureiswhen reveal the powerlessness the women experience and as the consequence of powerlessness, they feel marginalized.

Hashtags here could be considered as a medium to generate meaning in those contexts where they feel powerless. It is an attempt of the hermeneutically marginalized to reveal the powerlessness as well as to bring value to one's hermeneutically marginalized existence. Fricker presents this aspect through the concept of resilience.⁶⁸ Resilience is the tendency to survive misleading counter-evidence owing to the subject's being in a position to weight it against positive evidence already possessed. Through the medium of hashtags, the powerless and marginalized subject can challenge the already established evidences of the power structures in the society.

Conclusion

Assessing knowledge as a concept that basically deals with questions about how one should go about with reasoning and mould beliefs, Haslanger suggests that we need to think about whether we require the idea of knowledge at all or whether the idea of knowledge is cherished by human beings. According to her, an appropriate definition of knowledge will depend on an account of what is cognitively precious to human beings and will help the human beings to take up moral and political issues.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Fricker, "The Value of Knowledge and the Test of Time," 129.

⁶⁹ Haslanger, "What Knowledge Is and What It Ought to Be: Feminist Values and Normative Epistemology," 459–480.

Dominant social locations do not serve the interests of those who do not engross that location.⁷⁰ This idea of situated knowledge paves way for the idea of epistemic privilege. Using the social location of cyberspace, the members of the hashtag group contribute to knowledge by tweeting or tagging themes that are sensitive to them. In that way they upheld the interests of those who are left out from the social locations. By doing that they challenge the claims that those are oppressed do not always understand or see the structures that oppress them.

Feminist hashtags as an instrument that provides knowledge could be considered as a collective epistemic agent. In them, we have individual epistemic subject who makes use of the beliefs and assertions of others in order to form one's perspective on a certain question or theme. Groups are formed through the medium of hashtags in order to find facts. The formed groups have their own beliefs on the issue under consideration. Any attempt from a knowledge seeker in order to assess the justifiedness of the themes or questions of the feminist hashtag community is an entrance into the social side of the epistemological aspect. According to the opinion of Alwin Goldman⁷¹, social epistemology offer answers to the theoretical problems that the theorists in the particular would like to have. It also gives directive principles in the day today activities of belief forming. In the interpersonal level it gives instruction to the epistemic agent to revise one's own belief in order to attain a true belief. It can also direct the epistemic agent to follow doxastic steps that bring out justified belief in the circumstances. Though the revision of one's own belief aspect is not that evident in the feminist hashtags, they bring out justified belief in the circumstances. Testimony has a leading role in developing the interpersonal level of relationship and we assess on the role of testimony in knowledge production the next chapter.

⁷⁰ Crasnow, "Contemporary Standpoint Theory: Tensions, Integrations and Extensions," 192.

⁷¹ Goldman. "Knowledge in a Social World," 103-109.

Chapter 3

An Exploration into the Testimonial Aspect of Feminist Hashtags

Introduction

In the theory of knowledge, testimony is a key topic as it plays different roles in knowledge. Perception, memory, reason and testimony are the four different fountains of knowledge. Many a times we depend on the words of others as a source of knowledge. Human beings as social creatures look upon others for knowledge. In the social world, we not only gain knowledge from others but also take the role of informants in the society. Testimony stands for the different ways in which the word of others functions as a fountain of knowledge. Testimony is a source of knowledge in the life of a human being. According to Gelfert, “testimony is a paradigmatic case of epistemic dependence.”⁷² Epistemic dependence stands for any occasion in which a person’s belief is formed and sustained on other epistemic agents. It asserts the reliability on the knowledge of the other agents of knowledge. Relying on testimony helps us to expand our individual knowledge as well as to enrich knowledge of science and history.

Pritchard’s⁷³ illustrious notion of testimony-based belief suggests that any belief which a person logically and directly forms as a response to what one logically considers to be testimony and which is basically caused and sustained by testimony. John Mackie presents testimony as a way of gaining knowledge by being told by other

⁷² Gelfert, *A Critical Introduction to Testimony*, 12.

⁷³ Pritchard, “The Epistemology of Testimony,” 326.

people or by reading.⁷⁴ In the words of Elgin, the area of testimony includes utterances and inscriptions that purport to convey information and transmit warrant for the information they convey.⁷⁵ While Fricker considers testimony as ‘general telling,’⁷⁶ Sosa presents it as a statement of someone’s thoughts that they direct to the world and to no one in particular.⁷⁷ Coady presents natural testimony⁷⁸ with three different clauses. According to him, Only if one has the concept of evidence, one can testify. The testifier requires significant competence, authority and credentials to present the testimony. He also provides the room for depending on testimony for clearing disputed and unresolved questions.

Three conditions are needed for a hearer to come to know from the speaker. They are: that which is stated by the speaker is true, the speaker is reliable in presenting the testimony and hearer has some reason to support the reliability of the speaker. The speaker must be trustworthy and hearer must have the acumen for the trustworthiness of the speaker. The hearer enjoys a justified belief when the speaker is dependable and the hearer rightly evaluates the integrity of the claim of the speaker. If that belief is true, then both of them have the knowledge.

In the third chapter we analyze the transmission and generative aspects of testimony in general. We look into its ethical and epistemological relevance with the teachings of

⁷⁴ Mackie, ‘The Possibility of Innate Knowledge,’ 254.

⁷⁵ Elgin, ‘Take it from me: the Epistemological Status of Testimony,’ 292.

⁷⁶ Fricker, ‘Telling and Trusting: Reductionism and Anti-reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony,’ 396-97.

⁷⁷ Sosa, “Testimony and Coherence,” 219.

⁷⁸ A Speaker *S* testifies by making some statement *p* if and only if (1) His stating that **p** is evidence that *p* and is offered as evidence that *p*; (2) **S** has the relevant competence, authority, or credentials to state truly that *p*; (3) **S**’ s statement that *p* is relevant to some disputed or unresolved question (which may, or may not be, *p*?) and is directed to those who are in need of evidence on the matter.” Coady, *Testimony a Philosophical Study*, 42.

Miranda Fricker. To explore into the feminist hashtag, we pursue #WhyIStayed reflecting the epistemic and ethical aspects of it.

3.1 Testimony and Transmission of Knowledge

Testimony acts as a fountain of knowledge for the hearer as it is a way of transmitting the significant epistemic features of a particular belief from the speaker to the hearer. According to Gelfert,⁷⁹ the transmission model affirms the possibility of knowledge transmission through testimony in its weak form, and in the strong form, the transmission pattern affirms that while transmitting knowledge from the speaker to the hearer, testimony acts as a fountain of knowledge.

3.1.1 Welbourne's Theory of Testimony

Welbourne presents testimony as a basic route to gaining knowledge. He asserts that knowledge can be transmitted through testimony. According to him, knowledge doesn't become denatured by passing from one person to another.⁸⁰ Knowledge-pursuing and knowledge-presenting facets of human life do not correspond to the denaturing positions. In his opinion, three things are important for the transmission of knowledge: 1) The speaker must be speaking from knowledge, 2) speaker must have the purpose of informing the knowledge to the listener and 3) the listener must believe the speaker when one asseverates morsels of knowledge. Moreover, there are three supplementary specifications for the transmission of knowledge. They are: 1) lexical understanding, 2) referential understanding and 3) shared speech-act understanding.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Gelfert, *A Critical Introduction to Testimony*, 146.

⁸⁰ Michael Dummett says testimonial knowledge "is the transmission from one individual to another of knowledge." He goes on to say that the "original purveyor ... —the first link in the chain of transmission—must himself have known it ... or it cannot be knowledge for any of those who derived it ultimately from him" See Dummett, "Testimony and Memory," 264.

⁸¹ Welbourne, "Community of Knowledge," 310-313.

If only I have a linguistic understanding of what a speaker tries to convey, I have the lexical understanding. It is true that a person cannot gain knowledge from another's saying unless he does not know the meaning of the words pronounced by him. Only when someone comprehends to what the speaker refers to, there is referential understanding. Speech-act understanding stands for the occasions when the speaker attempts to convey knowledge, the listener should be able to comprehend that the speaker is doing so. If these three are not there the listener is not able to understand the speaker or misunderstanding the purpose of the speaker. If either of these situations is there, then the listener is not able to believe the speaker as a testifier.⁸²

3.1.2 Transmission of Testimony in First Wave Feminism

Sojourner Truth testifies to her ability to work like men in the field and thus challenges the predominant thinking that women are weaker than men. She transmits the knowledge that the black needs the equal rights like the white. Her testimony on muscular arm and watching the children sold into slavery presents women as competent and secure when the dominant forces of racism and sexism were raging war against her.⁸³ When she accounts the brutal killings of slave children, she transmits the despicability of slavery. The speech, *Ain't I a woman?*, testifies to the fact that she has the purpose of informing these pieces of knowledge to the listener. The later developments in the first wave feminism prove that the listeners were attentive and believed in the testimony of Sojourner Truth.

⁸² Welbourne, "The Community of Knowledge," 308-310.

⁸³ Siebler, "Far From the Truth: Teaching the Politics of Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?," 511-33.

3.1.3 Transmission of Testimony in Second Wave Feminism

Betty Freidan through her innovative phrase “the problem that has no name” testifies to the prevailing moral practices among the middle class educated society.⁸⁴ She transmits the knowledge that the consideration of the society was that the women should be governed by the male and to become a loved wife is the most desirable thing in the life of a woman.⁸⁵ Freidan also offers the testimony regarding the participation of women in the workforce and in education. The possible jobs for women were school teaching or reporters at the woman pages of the newspapers. The pressure on women to marry early was a hindrance for career opportunities. As a result of these, Freidan testifies, women of second wave feminism carried the ideology of a life style of staying home and taking care of children and a life which is governed and supported by the male.

3.1.4 Transmission of Testimony in Third Wave Feminism

The Riot Grrrl movement of the third wave feminism testifies to the sufferings due to the patriarchal society⁸⁶ and in the *Manifesto* they outline that they are slapped, depreciated, laughed at, objectified, raped, trivialized, pushed, ignored, stereotyped, kicked, scorned, molested, silenced, invalidated, knifed, shot, choked and killed⁸⁷.

⁸⁴ Epstein, “Revisiting *The Feminine Mystique*”, 764-5.

⁸⁵ Bowlby analyses “The Problem with no name” with the statement that women had freedom early and they lost it as the starting point of the “problem.” See Bowlby, “Re-reading Freidan’s *The Feminine Mystique*”, 61-75.

⁸⁶ Yarrow, “How the Riot Grrrl Movement Sold the World on Girl Power,” accessed on Dec 3, 2019, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/how-the-riot-grrrl-movement-sold-the-world-on-girl-power>

⁸⁷Hanna, “Riot Girl Manifesto,” accessed on February 8, 2019
<https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/riotgrrrlmanifesto.html>.

The third wave feminists transmit the knowledge that the society does not represent their interests. They promoted the slogan Do It Yourself in order to protest against and raise consciousness.

3.1.5 Transmission of Testimony in Hashtags

In the contemporary era hashtags are used as a tool to testify on the social media. Here we attempt to analyze one of the feminist hashtags, #WhyIStayed, to study the transmission and generative aspects of testimony. #WhyIStayed is a hashtag introduced by Beverly Gooden in order to share the sufferings of those women who underwent the tragedy of domestic abuse. It reveals the complexities around the domestic violence. There were several reasons behind suffering the domestic violence. Fear was a major factor that compelled many to remain in an abusive relationship. The tweets like “I was afraid of him.. I knew he’d make leaving an ugly drawn out nightmare,” “I was scared if I tried to leave that something worse would happen to me,” “I tried to leave the house once after an abusive episode, and he blocked me. He slept in front of the door that entire night.” etc., confirm the role of fear that forced the victim to be with the abuser.⁸⁸

Feeling of self-worth was another reason that pressurized the victim to go along with the abusive relationship. The tweets like “In his presence I became the lowest denomination of myself,” “He made me believe I was worthless and alone,” and “I was convinced I wasn’t worth anything” confirm that reality.

⁸⁸ Keller, “19 #WhyIStayed Tweets That Everyone Needs to See,” accessed on December 1, 2019, <https://www.mic.com/articles/98326/19-why-istayed-tweets-that-everyone-needs-to-see>.

Lack of social support coerced many a woman to continue with the abusive relationship.⁸⁹ When they tweet like “I fell out of contact with everyone who was important to me,” “you need to choose: them or me, that’s the ultimatum my abuser gave me,” “we did not have shelters when this was happening to me. There was no hotline,” etc., presents the social isolation suffered by women forced them to be in the abusive relationship.

Financial issues intimidated the victims to continue with the abuser. Members tweeted that “because I had no money”, “financial fear is one large factor of why I stayed” and “I wanted financial stability for my kids” point to the role of money in an abusive relationship.

Concern for the children was another hindrance to move out of an abusive marital relationship. “Because I wanted my son to have a father,” “I believed a child needed both parents” and “Because I was afraid he would hurt our child if I wasn’t there to run interference” point to the desire of the victim to protect her children. The desire was so powerful that they never wanted a break up with the partner and it resulted in to be with the abuser.⁹⁰

The desire to offer assistance to one’s own partner influenced the victims of abuse to stay back in the relationship. “Because I wanted to help him,” “because he told me that he needed me to be able to fix himself” and “he needed me to make him better”

⁸⁹ McCarthy, “#WhyIStayed Is A Powerful Way For Domestic Violence Victims Like Janay Rice To Heal,” accessed on December 1, 2019, <https://www.bustle.com/articles/39424-whyistayed-is-a-powerful-way-for-domestic-violence-victims-like-janay-rice-to-heal>.

⁹⁰ Khazan, “Why They Stayed: For Janay Rice and other abuse victims, the obstacles to leaving are more complicated than many people think,” accessed on November 28, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/09/why-they-stayed/379843/>, Sept 9, 2014.

underline the fact that the desire from the part of the victim to help her partner necessitated her to continue with the abusive relationship.⁹¹

Expectation from the family of the victim was another factor that impelled the victim to go along with the abusive relationship.⁹² The tweets like “my family said I have to stand by my man no matter what, they would make me go back to an abuser,” “Because my mom stayed” and “I stayed because dysfunction was all I knew” divulge that reality.

3.2 Testimony as a Generative Source of Knowledge

The generative aspect of testimony comes up when testimony is involved in creating communities of knowledge in the process of sharing the knowledge and by granting entry into the knowledge. Kusch holds that communities of knowledge are performatively enacted. The practice of greeting people is present in the society not through the actions of a single individual or by the clear assertion at the collective level.⁹³ As testimony is partly performative, it is also generative.

3.2.1 Martin Kusch’s Theory on Testimony as Generative Source of Knowledge

Martin Kusch presents testimony as the social side of knowledge and places perception, memory and reason as the faculties of individual mind. Most of the knowledge possessed by human beings has its source on the words of others. Testimony stands for the knowledge gained from others. Reports on our birth, on our

⁹¹ Linabary et al., “Feminist Activism in Digital Space: Post Feminist Contradictions in #WhyIStayed,” accessed on December 3, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1461444819884635>.

⁹² Weathers et al. “From Silence to #WhyIStayed: Locating Our Stories and Finding Our Voices,” 4-5.

⁹³ Kusch, “Testimony in Communitarian Epistemology,” 340-350.

parents, correct manner of acquiring the language skills, etc. are from the versions of different people like parents, teachers and friends. Testimony includes different acts of communication like statements, nods, pointings, etc., that are meant to convey information.⁹⁴

Though the individualist arguments hold on to the view that testimony is not a generative source of knowledge, Kusch asserts the possibility of testimony as a source of generative knowledge. He does it by holding on to the importance of performative speech acts and by forwarding the concept of performative testimony. A performative speech –act has been successfully executed if the world fits the content of the utterance. And enacting the performative speech-act usually ensures that the world does indeed fit the utterance.⁹⁵ A new social fact is created by the knowledge of the utterance.

Performative testimony does not permit us to think of telling something and knowing the same as independent events. By forming a community of knowledge to people not only jointly knowing something but also obtaining knowledge of the same. In other words, the commitment of two people creates a chain of rights and through the created the string of relationship each of them has the right to claim the knowledge. Performative testimony generates knowledge as knowledge does not exist prior to the telling.

3.2.2 Testimony as s Generative Source of Knowledge in First Wave Feminism

The Seneca Falls convention led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Women’s Rights Movement led by Frederick Douglass and the Ohio Convention led by Lucy Gage are some of the typical examples of first wave feminism of creating communities in order

⁹⁴ Lackey, “Testimonial Knowledge,” 476.

⁹⁵ Kusch, “Testimony in Communitarian Epistemology,” 346-350.

to share knowledge. Seneca Falls convention discussed the social, civil and religious condition and rights of women. Frederick Douglass who was active in women's rights movement also played a key role in the movement to abolish slavery. Lucy Gage who led the women's convention in Ohio in 1851 worked tirelessly for women's rights and temperance.

3.2.3 Testimony as s Generative Source of Knowledge in Second Wave Feminism

In 1966 National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded by 28 women including Betty Friedan in order to function as a civil rights organization for women. There were also groups as PWC (Professional Women's Caucus, FEW (Federally Employed Women) and WEAL (Women's Equity Action League).⁹⁶ These movements and groups challenged the sexism existed in the society.

3.2.4 Testimony as s Generative Source of Knowledge in Third Wave Feminism

In 1980, the ACT UP movement protested against the homophobic violence and heterosexism in US. They stood for sexual liberation and argued that a sex positive culture will liberate both men and women. The Riot Grrrl movement of 1990s upheld do-it-yourself as their slogan and brought out independent record labels, feminist zines and art. Through their music they challenged the sexual violence and atrocities by the police.

3.2.5 Generative Testimony and Hashtags

The hashtag community #WhyIStayed is itself is an apt proof for generative testimony as it has created a community of members who have been struggling with and suffering from domestic violence. They share the knowledge on different forms of domestic violence and grant us entry into their knowledge. The cyberspace community

⁹⁶ Freeman, "The Women's Liberation Movement: Its Origins, Structures and Ideas," accessed on December 3, 2018, <https://www.jofreeman.com/feminism/liberationmov.htm>

#WhyIStayed has also created many offshoots. #WhyILeft, #TimesUp, #EverydaySexism, etc. #WhyILeft attempts to justify a woman who doesn't want to remain in an abusive relationship. #EverydaySexism helps women to come up with their stories to promote gender equality issues. #TimesUp supports women to seek regress in judicial system for every harassment by male.

3.3 Role of Community in Testimony

Testimony has a great role in the scientific community. Scientific researchers depend on the outcomes of other researchers in order to improve their own successful research projects. The fruitfulness of the scientific researches is due to the presence of sincere and competent testifiers in the scientific community. In the non-scientific situations of daily activities testimony involves coherence considerations.⁹⁷ They are related not only to the harmony of different people's testimonies but also to the harmony of people's testimonies with our own observations. In a situation where speakers are sincere, there will be harmony and unity in their testimony and it goes along well with our observations also.⁹⁸

One condition for a successful act of imparting knowledge is that the speaker and the hearer already have knowledge in common. But two people can have knowledge in common without being fellow members in a community of knowledge. They may have no idea that they have, being separated by language or by space and time. Acts of imparting knowledge, however, can only succeed where the participants in an exchange are able to make certain assumptions of common knowledge. It is only

⁹⁷ Fricker explains it as follows: It often happens in particular cases that one first learns of something through another's testimony, and then is later able to confirm it for oneself through perception, perhaps combined with memory and inference. My daughter tells me her new teacher wears glasses; later I see the teacher for myself. The weather forecaster on Tuesday predicts that it will rain on Wednesday; Wednesday proves wet. Facts about a foreign country known to one at first only through travel literature and friends' reports are confirmed by perception, when one travels there oneself. In these and countless similar cases one later gets first-hand perceptual evidence of what one first believed on testimony. See Fricker, "Testimony and Epistemic Autonomy," 225–250.

⁹⁸ Douven & Cuyppers, "Fricker on Testimonial Justification," 36-44.

within the context of such a community that the relationships between knowledge and understanding can be properly understood. The members of the #WhyIStayed community have common knowledge on domestic violence and when they share their knowledge on it, it is understood better by the members due to the commonality in knowledge, i. e. on domestic violence.

3.3.1 Transmission of Testimony and Community

Welbourne brings up the community of knowledge to state that belongingness to a community helps the members to transmit and receive knowledge. The transmission of knowledge in community will help the enlargement of knowledge and the bond among the members becomes stronger. According to Welbourne a primitive community of knowledge is formed by the circulation of knowledge from one person from the other. The members of the community know the same thing and consider each other as partakers in the knowledge. Sharing the same knowledge helps them to function in harmony. It brings dynamism to the community through communication. The members of the group make a commitment to the knowledge they share and they cherish the shared-knowledge as the common truth.

3.3.2 Generative Testimony and Community

Performative testimony is based on performative speech-acts. A performative speech-act attains its purpose if the world fits the content of the pronouncements. Performative testimony is a generative source of knowledge, i.e., that the knowledge does not exist prior to the telling. Kush argues that social institutions and social status are the outcomes of performative speech-acts. It is an action that is basically performed by we. It is a generative fountain of knowledge as the knowledge does not exist prior to the telling of it.

3.4 Analysis of #WhyIStayed through the Lenses of Miranda Fricker

Miranda Fricker is one of the eminent feminist thinkers who have contributed abundantly to the literature associated with testimony. Here we look into some of her original contributions to the theme of testimony in order to analyze feminist hashtags, especially #WhyIStayed.

3.4.1 Testimonial injustice⁹⁹

There are two types of disorders in the epistemological practices, according to Miranda Fricker. If there are prejudices from the part of the hearer, the speaker receives a sort of void trustworthiness.¹⁰⁰ The prejudices from the part of the hearer, the circulation of the knowledge through testimony could be hindered. As a result of it the speaker is discredited in his/her role as a knower. When a human being is harmed as a knower it has various political implications as human beings have important epistemic life. The idea of being wronged in one's capacity as a knower forms the essential feature of epistemic injustice. When a speaker receives a sort of void reliability from the hearer, it wrongs to the speaker and it is known as testimonial injustice. Identity prejudices cause credibility deficits consequently there emerges testimonial injustice. In the words of Fricker, credibility deficit is the primary characterization of testimonial injustice.¹⁰¹

Under #WhyIStayed, there are typical examples that prove this point. "When I'd tell my mom about the times he went into a rage, she'd ask me what I did to upset him"

⁹⁹ Fricker analyzes testimonial injustices by presenting Anthony Minghella's screenplay of Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and from Harper's Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* that unveils the trial of a black man, Tom Robinson, in 1935 Alabama. In the first one Marge who is a woman suffers identity prejudice based on the concept that women are emotional and emotionality does not go along with rationality. In the second one, Black man Tom Robinson undergoes the pain of credibility deficit due to identity prejudice.

¹⁰⁰ Fricker, "Forum on Miranda FRICKER's Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing," 69.

¹⁰¹ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 21.

and “You aren’t working hard enough on your marriage unless you forgive him his family said. You aren’t being a good wife.” These tweets reveal the prejudices from the part of the hearer when the informant testifies the domestic violence. The listeners in the context of these tweets discredit the informant.

3.4.2 Hermeneutical Injustice¹⁰²

Hermeneutical injustice takes place due to the structurally prejudiced collective resources. Someone’s transmission of a social experience becomes defective due to the disparities in communal comprehension. There are unbalances in the way epistemological concepts and credibility is distributed in the society. Basing upon such discrepancies, Fricker presents the idea of hermeneutical marginalization. The socially underprivileged members are occluded from having ingress to transmitting knowledge due to a vacuity in hermeneutical resource. In the words of Fricker, hermeneutical resources are concepts shared in the social imagination. She considers them as the shared tools of social interpretation.¹⁰³ They are popularly known and accessible for use in understanding the self and sharing information with others. Hermeneutical injustice has a predominant role as it blocks the social experience from collective understanding due to structural identity prejudice.¹⁰⁴ According to her, situated hermeneutical inequality is the “lived experience of being unfairly disadvantaged in rendering one’s social experiences intelligible to others and possibly even to oneself.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Fricker presents the difficulties of a person who is not able to present his legitimate homosexual orientation in cultural situation fearing that he would be considered a pervert. As a result the person will not be able to make a sense of his sexuality properly as he is blocked by the society. He is prevented in making his contribution to the collective resource for social meaning due to the existing distorted views in the society. Fricker presents it as situated hermeneutical inequality.

¹⁰³ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, P.6.

¹⁰⁴ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 155.

¹⁰⁵ Fricker, Forum on Miranda FRICKER’s *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 70.

There are numerous tweets in #WhyIStayed that assert the hermeneutical injustices. The tweets like “In my case the women’s shelter made you leave after 30 days. Not enough time for a women to support herself,” “had no one to turn to,” “I was convinced for a long time that it was me and I thought I was the problem,” “He isolated me so perfectly from my friends & family that I couldn’t conceive of a safe place to fall” and “I thought there was more I could do to change him and fix us” underline the structural identity prejudice.

Testimonial and Hermeneutical injustices are implanted in the historical and cultural situation of human society. Hashtags challenge those injustices and attempt to remove inevitability of the notions from the mind set up of the people. Hashtags help the hearer and reader to be reflective. Once we are reflective, it will help us to remove the loaded perceptions. There is less possibility of identity prejudice also. They help the members of the hashtag groups to come out of their status as victim of testimonial injustice as they are not viewed in the group as untrustworthy or non-trustworthy. Moreover, the recommendation of Fricker to develop testimonial sensibility helps the hearer and reader to cultivate testimonial justice which involves the inculcation of “distinctly reflexive critical social awareness.”¹⁰⁶

3.4.3 Model Informant

Miranda Fricker suggests for a trio of epistemic needs.¹⁰⁷ It is necessary to have true beliefs for practical success. It is necessary to take advantage of information possessed by others. It is also necessary to distinguish good informants from bad informants.

¹⁰⁶ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 91.

¹⁰⁷ Fricker, “Group Testimony? The Making of a Collective Good Informant,” 251-252.

Good informant is equal to an idealized testifier. He is likely to be right on the testimony he gives. His communications are not blocked by insincerity and these two qualities of the informant are visible to the inquirer. He relates with the inquirer as a fellow epistemic agent. Since he is relating with the inquirer on the basis of the epistemic need, the relationship exists between them is an interpersonal relationship. Moreover, the testifier considers his act as an illocutionary one in which he has an authority on the matter on which testifies and for which he is capable of providing evidence. A good informant is proficient and inclined to tell the inquirer what he needs to know. The inquirer trust the informant due to this. Miranda Fricker raises the grade of testimony from the epistemic to the ethical level by bringing in the element of trust in testimony. According to her, when the inquirer meets the informant with his testimony, the inquirer prompts his epistemic dependence on the informant. The informant in turn takes up the duty to honor the trust placed on him. In this exercise, testimony moves beyond the transmission of belief and knowledge. It is a way of taking responsibility on the epistemic status of the inquirer.¹⁰⁸

Beverly Gooden as a good informant testifies to the domestic violence by presenting the reasons behind remaining in an abusive relationship. She had a good number of reasons to remain.

The element of fear is evident when she tweets *I tried to leave the house once after an abusive episode, and he blocked me. He slept in front of the door that entire night.* The influence of religion is visible when she tweets *I stayed because my pastor told me that God hates divorce. It didn't cross my mind that God might hate abuse, too.* The power of false promises is explicit when she says *He said he would change. He promised it was the last time. I believed him. He lied.* The fact of lack of resources are brought into light when she tweets *I had to plan my escape for months before I even*

¹⁰⁸ Fricker, "Group Testimony? The Making of a Collective Good Informant," 258-59.

had a place to go and money for the bus to get there. Gooden takes up responsibility for the abuse by tweeting I stayed because I thought love was enough to conquer all. The lack of support from close circles is obvious when she tweets I stayed because I was halfway across the country, isolated from my friends and family. And there was no one to help me and finally she says You think you know but you have no idea.

Beverly presents unerring testimony and there is no deception in her words. She is competent to corroborate the events and shows dexterity in presenting everything that the inquirer wants to know. The tweets by the other members are evidences for honoring the trust and they proved to be esteeming the epistemic status of the inquirer.

3.4.4 Group Testimony and Hashtags

Miranda Fricker proposes for a group testifier by the way of joint commitment to trustworthiness. Any group brought about by the way of joint commitment to trustworthiness represents the inter-subjective relation.¹⁰⁹ In offering the testimony, the group requests the public to trust its word and if the public respond the group with trust, the deal of trust gets sealed. The sharers of the testimony in #WhyIStayed are committed to share their story in a trustworthy manner. In one of the data analysis on #WhyIStayed, it evaluated 2522 sample tweets. The analysis revealed that among the 2522 tweets, 765 of them were personal accounts of a victim to be away from an abuser and 416 tweets were in support of their decision to be away.¹¹⁰ It proves the account of trust as presented by Fricker that is to be developed in testimonial accounts. The informants upheld the ethical and epistemic credibility of their testimony which in turn invite the expressions of supports from the inquirers.

¹⁰⁹ Fricker, “Group Testimony? The Making of a Collective Good Informant,” 272.

¹¹⁰ Clark-Parsons, “Hope in a Hashtag”: The Discursive Activism of #WhyIStayed”, 796.

Conclusion

Philosophers have reflected on testimony invariably. They have viewed as a way of knowing, as utterances that convey information, as general telling, etc. The transmission and generative aspects of testimony of Welbourne and Kush respectively place testimony affirmatively on the side of philosophical epistemology. According to Welbourne, believing a person is not merely an act of what he says but to consider him as a knowledge generator on the matter of his pronouncement. Belief of persons is necessary for the community of knowledge. Miranda Fricker adjoins ethics to epistemology by adding the element of trust into the notion of testimony. All these trends are evident in feminist hashtags, especially in #WhyIStayed. The experiences and knowledge gained from testimony are of good help in framing policies for women. We assess that aspect in the fourth chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY FOR FEMINIST POLICY MAKING AND POLICY ANALYSIS

Introduction

Feminism stands for the basic equality of men and women and commits itself to remove the gender based injustices. Many of the injustices are institutionalized by policies and privileges. Therefore, feminists aim at public policies through diverse types of campaigns for a rectification in the systematic injustice suffered by women.¹¹¹ Feminist policy makers have dependent on different factors in bringing out feminist policies. Policy practitioners make use of empirical observation to test and explore hypotheses in order to bring out theses on gender, politics and state. They look for making definitions of feminism from observation and study. Some of the Feminist policy makers look for including women and ideas that favor women's rights. In order to promote gender equality, they suggest for including women's interests and issues. Feminist researchers focus on gender, the social construction of differences between man and women. Feminine experiences and testimonies have had their roles in framing up feminist policies. Feminists argue for framing the policies on the basis of the experiences and knowledge of women.¹¹² One of the policy frameworks that give importance to experience and testimony is advocacy coalition framework. Here, in this chapter we look into the components of advocacy coalition framework in order to develop the idea that how feminist epistemology based on experience and testimony can be made use in feminist policy making. For the analysis, we look into the hashtags associated with the Nirbhaya incident.

¹¹¹ Hawkesworth, "Policy Studies within Feminist Frame," 97.

¹¹² Jain & Elson, *Harvesting Feminist Knowledge for Public Policy*, xxxiv.

4.1 Advocacy Coalition Framework

Advocacy coalition framework emphasizes the importance of actors within the policy formulation and implementation process. Those policies that are affected and applied through constructive participation of every actor who are touched by the public problem are known as actor centered policies. The actors are categorized into formal and informal actors.¹¹³ The formal ones are responsible for establishing policy while the latter are the ones who are affected by the policy and who provides policy ideas toward addressing their problem and to ensure that policy is effective. The actors are actively concerned with a problem. While the formal actors are involved in the policy formulation process, the informal actors express the policy demands and suggest policy alternatives. Implementation of a policy will be effective if the policy demands are included in the policy.

4.2 Influence of Waves of Feminism in Feminist Policy Making

Women's movements of the past have interacted with the State through policy formation.¹¹⁴ Through different movements and actions, feminist ideas have got translated into State policies. The interplay between feminist movements and public policies are evident in different waves of feminism. Women's movements have played a good role in developing public policies related to women.

4.2.1 First Wave Feminism and Policy Making

We have already seen how Sojourner Truth explicitly narrated how female slaves suffered unique hardships. They were exploited for labor and reproductivity.¹¹⁵ While

¹¹³ Formal ones include the legislators, executive, judiciary and civil servants and the informal ones include civil society i.e., interest groups, political parties, pressure groups.

¹¹⁴ Mazur, *Theorizing Feminist Policy*, 14.

¹¹⁵ Tsesis, "Gender Discrimination and the Thirteenth Amendment," 1645.

black women experienced the horrors of slavery, the other women were prohibited from enjoying equality with men. Prominent abolitionists like Elizabeth Stanton worked hard to end the racial and sexist injustices. It had a great impact on the policy making in US. Feminists had a great role in framing the 13th amendment of the Constitution. The amendment abolished slavery in US and made a commitment to the principle of liberal equality and deplored the injustices of the past.¹¹⁶

4.2.2 Second Wave Feminism and Policy Making

Betty Freidan and the organization NOW had their roles in the formation of Equal Rights Amendment. According to the amendment, the Constitution guarantees equal legal rights for American citizens regardless of sex. It seeks to end the legal distinctions between men and women in terms of divorce, property, employment and other matters. NOW was also active in order to ratify the amendment in 38 States of US. The Equal Credit Opportunity Act and the Educational Amendments of 1972 are the other major feminist policies of the time.¹¹⁷

4.2.3 Third Wave Feminism and Policy Making

Governments started to review hundreds of mishandled sex crimes and wanted to be away from the unconscious biases that existed in the mind of investigators to take rape

¹¹⁶ The other achievements of feminists of first wave feminism include the 19th amendment to the US Constitution that granted women's suffrage and Married Women's Property Acts.

¹¹⁷ Freeman's 'Women and Public Policy: An Overview' (1982) catalogued a history of feminist policy successes during the second wave of the American women's movement. Freeman cited the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (which prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of sex as well as age, race, ethnicity and national origin), Executive Orders 11276 and 11375 (which established the Affirmative Action policy), the creation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments (which prohibited sex discrimination in educational programs supported by federal funds), *Griswold v. Connecticut* and *Roe v. Wade* (which established women's right to contraception and abortion, respectively), reform of state rape statutes, and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, as examples of feminist policy victories.

allegations seriously. Many governments vowed for zero tolerance on violence against women.¹¹⁸

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a landmark piece of legislation signed by President Bill Clinton in 1994. It was reauthorized in 2000, 2005 and 2013. The legislation acknowledged domestic violence and sexual assault as crimes and offered programs that help the victims of sexual assaults. There were provisions in the legislation to provide safety and justice to the Native American women and LGBT survivors. Provisions were also included in order to provide safe housing for the survivors, protection for immigrant survivors and justice on campuses.¹¹⁹

Third wave feminists occupy a leading role in reframing abortion politics into reproductive rights/justice.¹²⁰ They included the concerns of the black woman and propagated the view that the despicable situations of the black women require the need of reproductive justice.¹²¹ Reproductive justice looked for safeguarding the bodily, spiritual and financial wellness of the black women.

4.2.4 Advocacy Coalition Framework and the Three Waves of Feminism

Coalitions are defined as a set of actors who are involved in dealing with a policy problem and identifying solutions to the problem.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Mendes, “Changing the Message about Rape: One SlutWalk at a Time,” In *The Conversation*, July 21, 2015. <https://theconversation.com/changing-the-message-about-rape-one-slutwalk-at-a-time-43982>.

¹¹⁹ “VAWA 2013 Reauthorization,” *Policy Center*, <https://nnedv.org/content/vawa-2013-reauthorization/>

¹²⁰ Evans, *The Politics of Third Wave Feminism*, 182.

¹²¹ National Organization for Women, NARAL Pro-Choice America, the Feminist Majority Foundation and others — brought out more than 1 million people protesting President George W. Bush’s anti-woman, anti-choice policies. See Valenti, “Slut Walks and the Future of Feminism,” *The Washington Post*, June 3, 2011.

¹²² Sabatier, “The Advocacy Coalition Framework,” 128.

In the advocacy coalition framework, the State has the higher role in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. We see the fact that the State follows the advocacy coalition framework in the first three waves of feminism in implementing the policies that are favorable to the women. The State ensures the interests of the policy beneficiaries. By taking such a stand in the policy making, the State solved the problems in a better manner and made sure that the maximum number of citizens is benefitted from the policy.

The actors of the three waves of feminism are grouped into a number of advocacy coalitions that consists of individuals who share particular belief system like a set of basic values, causal assumptions and problem perception. They attempted to realize a set of shared policy beliefs by influencing the behavior of multiple governmental institutions over time. Freeman's ¹²³ analysis goes along with the theoretical components of advocacy framework. According to Freeman, one of the crucial factors that reshaped public policy during the Second wave feminism is that the feminist activists joined alliances in the grass root level with national women's organizations [e.g., the National Organization for Women (NOW), the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL), the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), the National Association of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (NBPW)] in feminist policy networks creating a formidable lobbying force.

The slutwalks¹²⁴ of third wave feminists have contributed to the policy making in different ways. The members of the riot Grrrl bands engraved the word 'slut' on their

¹²³ Freeman, "Women and Public Policy: An Overview," 63.

¹²⁴ There were more than 200 slutwalks in different cities all over the world with the aims to argue that women should be free to wear what they want without any fear of attack and to re-appropriate the term slut. The protest aims at changing the victim blaming exercise by the male dominated society represented by the Canadian police officer who advised women to avoid dressing like sluts to avoid victimisation.

bodies in order to demonstrate sexual empowerment and freedom.¹²⁵ The slutwalks promote women to challenge the existing norms that monitor female sexuality.¹²⁶ As the result of the slutwalks, governments started to recognize the importance of collective solutions on sexual violence. The Battered Women's Movement too played a key role in the making up of VAWA.¹²⁷ Advocacy framework concentrates on voluntarily created associations or coalitions. The crux of the advocacy framework is to force the analyst to empirically definite individual's belief system.

4.3 Policy Making in Fourth Wave Feminism

During the fourth wave of feminism, social media has played a key role in feminist policy making. According to Loiseau and Nowacka, "the explosion of social media and unprecedented use by women of new technologies represents important opportunities to bring gender equality and women's rights issues to the forefront of both policy making and media attention."¹²⁸ Feminist hashtags at different occasions have helped the society in decision making. We have already seen how hashtags have done that in the previous chapters. Moreover, #BringBackOurGirls campaign was the power behind the rescuing the abducted Nigerian girls. The hashtag campaign, #DelhiGangRape was a instrument that brought forward gender based atrocities in India and mobilized the public to stand for stringent laws against such atrocities. As a result of it, the Government introduced anti-rape provisions in the Criminal Code.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Attwood, "Sluts and Riot Grrrls: Female Identity and Sexual Agency," 233-247.

¹²⁶ Evans, *The Politics of Third Wave Feminism*, 78.

¹²⁷ Aday, "The Effectiveness of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in Creating System Level Change," 4.

¹²⁸ Loiseau & Nowacka, "Can Social Media Effectively Include Women's Voices in Decision-Making Process," March 2015.

¹²⁹ Sharma, R. (2014), "Social Media as a Formidable Force for Change," accessed on December 3, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/power-of-social-media-dem_b_6103222.html.

4.3.1 Nirbhaya Tweets

Medical student Jyoti Singh and her friend Avanindra Pandey while boarding back home on a private bus in South Delhi on December 16, 2012 were beaten up by four men. The four barbarous and callous gangsters raped Jyoti Singh inside the bus. She and her half-conscious friend were thrown out of the bus by the rapists. While Avanindra Pandey survived, Jyoti died on December 29. The media named Jyoti Singh as Nirbhaya. “The heinous nature of Singh’s rape, it’s urban and supposedly safe setting, and the indifferent attitudes of the authorities held responsible led to the voicing of demands for a structural change.”¹³⁰

Internet had its great role in mobilizing people to bring justice for the cause of Nirbhaya. The whatsapp users used the image of a black on the white background as the display picture symbolizing a collective shame and blot on the society. The general public expressed their anguish on the issue by making use of the hashtags #StopThisShame, #Death4Rape, #IamNirbhaya etc. There were 6561 tweets on an average per day and on December 23, 2012 the number of tweets tolled up to 15421.¹³¹ #IamNirbhaya aimed to become the voice of every woman who fights back daily. #StopThisShame demanded for a change in the law on rape. #Death4Rape cried out for public hanging of the rapists.

#Death4Rape demanded capital punishment as the only way to keep the sick minded away (Sumeta Syed) and as rape has become a routine event (Syed Ali Raza Abidi). #IamNirbhaya campaign on twitter was also a platform to share the experiences and testimonies on sexual assault and abuses.

¹³⁰ Bhakshi, “The Nirbhaya Movement: An Indian Feminist Revolution,” accessed on December 3, 2019, <http://www.gnovisjournal.org/2017/05/02/the-nirbhaya-movement-an-indian-feminist-revolution/>

¹³¹ Ahmed et al. “Tweeting India’s Nirbhaya Protest: A Study of Emotional Dynamics in an Online Social Movement,” 9.

4.3.2 Nirbhaya Incident and the Policy Changes

As the result of the agitations after the Nirbhaya case, there was the change in law through the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 2013 that changed different sections of the Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence Act and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

4.3.3 Nirbhaya Act

The Government had set up a commission¹³² under Justice J. S. Verma on December 23, 2012 to bring forth changes in the criminal law so that the convicts of sexual crimes will undergo severe punishment. The Verma Commission recommended amendment in different sections of the Indian Penal Code,¹³³ the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act. Capital punishment was allowed in the occasion if the sexual assault led to the death of the victim or if the victim turned out to be in persistent vegetative state after the sexual assault. Death sentence was also sanctioned if the accused was a repeat offender. There were also provisions to punish the rape accused for 20 years or with life imprisonment and the payment of a huge fine. There were also punishments for acid attacks, stalking and voyeurism. The offender in an acid attack could be punished for five to seven years and if the attack had harmed the victim the sentence could be for 10 years. If the offender repeated stalking and voyeurism the offence became non-bailable.

¹³² The committee was asked to complete its report as a matter of urgency and submit its findings within 30 days (Verma, Seth, & Subramaniam, 2013). The Verma Commission handed over its reports to the government on 23 January 2013, exactly 30 days after the commission was set up by the government.

¹³³ These are acid attack (Section 326 A), attempt to acid attack (326B), sexual harassment (354 A), act with intention to disrobe a woman (354 B), Voyeurism (354 C) and stalking (354 D)

4.3.4 Nirbhaya Fund

The Government had also set up a fund – Nirbhaya Fund¹³⁴ – for projects that will help to improve the safety and security of women.¹³⁵ Emergency Women Support System, Victim Compensation Fund, Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children, One Stop Centre Scheme, Mahila Police Volunteers and Universalization of Women Helpline are the major Schemes under the Fund.¹³⁶

4.3.5 Advocacy coalition framework In Nirbhaya Hashtags

The integrants of ACF is perceptible in the legislation of Nirbhaya policy and Nirbhaya fund. Justice Verma admits the role of actors in the legislation stating that the constitution of the judicial Committee is due to the outcry of the civil society, especially the young who protested against the Government that has failed in providing safety to the women and who wanted a dignified environment for the women in India. He admits that the cry of the civil society is for the preservation of the rule of law.

Sabatier proposes that the policy process is an aperture for between coalitions of actors who endorse beliefs about policy problems and solutions. The actors are upset over a problem and are interested in influencing policies related to it. Coalition Framework pays a lot of attention to the competing interactions between advocacy coalitions in a policy subsystem. The subsystem may exist in a wider and can be

¹³⁴Nirbhaya Fund is an Indian rupee 10 billion corpus announced by Government of India in its 2013 Union Budget. According to the then Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, this fund is expected to support initiatives by the government and NGOs working towards protecting the dignity and ensuring safety of women in India.

¹³⁵ Ministry of Women and Child Development, *Framework for Nirbhaya Fund*, accessed on November 26, 2019, https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Approved%20framework%20for%20Nirbhaya%20Fund_0.pdf

¹³⁶ “Nirbhaya Case: All You Want to Know About Nirbhaya Fund and Nirbhaya Act,” *Times of India*, Dec 18, 2019.

influenced heavily by the political and external environment. In coalition framework actors are essential as they articulate crucial ideas for policy formation. He further argues that the framework focuses on shared beliefs between actors who are influential towards an effective policy formation and information. The shared beliefs by many actors may translate the ideas into policy decision and outcomes. Hence, the implementation of policies becomes easier and effective.

The actors made use of cyber activism and Twitpic to trigger protest. Twitter played a great role in making sure the civic engagement. The actors made use of social media for up-to-date expression and presentation of opinions of the reality.¹³⁷ The authorities were wondering on who was organizing the protest and they did not know how to answer back to the extending exasperation of the public. Even though there was no leader as such the protests procured more power.¹³⁸ Dey analyses this as an example on how digital subjects challenge oppression and confront authority to an alteration. Digital platforms proved in Nirbhaya case that they are powerful in circulating ideas, crystallizing contemporary contours of debates, and connecting to disparate collaborators so that prolific processes of protest could proceed.¹³⁹

The advocacy coalition suggests for developing policies on the basis of the ideas that are based on varieties of perceptions. Different perceptions according to it are important in bringing out solution to a particular problem. Once the policy practitioner has the access to the viewpoints of the affected people, he will be in a better position to develop and provide efficient solution to the problem. ACF suggests for focusing on

¹³⁷ Ahmed & Jaidka, "Protests against Delhi Gang Rape on Twitter: Analyzing India's Arab Spring," In *JeDem – Journal of Democracy and Open Government*, November 2013, 5 (1) : 28-58.

¹³⁸ Narang, "Understanding Social and Legal Impacts of Nirbhaya Movement, India (2012)," *IJDR*, 6.

¹³⁹ Dey, "Sites of Exception: Gender Violence, Digital Activism, and Nirbhaya's Zone of Anomie in India," 7.

the policy actors will be of help to identify and promote the beliefs and to act as part of coalitions. In doing so beliefs could be made into policies.¹⁴⁰

4.4 Policy Analysis

Feminist analysts have varieties of notions on feminist policy analysis. Policy analysis involves identifying, examining, explaining and understanding the content, causes and consequences of public policies. Pascal opines that “feminist analysis is most obviously putting women in where they have been left out, about keeping women centre stage,”¹⁴¹ Feminist policy analysis aims at making women visible in policy. It looks into how the lives of women and their activities are controlled and ordered by the policy. Feminist policy analysis also looks for ending sexist oppression of women and empowering women.¹⁴²

4.4.1 Policy Analysis of First Wave Feminism

The consequence of the 13th amendment was that it ended slavery. It helped to change the erroneous practices of the society and created an equal country.¹⁴³ Women became the central figures as it empowered them with liberty and equality. The right to enfranchisement had also the same effect in the society and with the lives of women. Gender inequalities had inflicted dreadful disabilities among the women prior to the period of 13th amendment.¹⁴⁴ They were allowed to enter into contracts, sell property

¹⁴⁰ Sabatier and Weible, “The Advocacy Coalition Framework: Innovations and Clarifications,” 192; 196.

¹⁴¹ Pascall, *Social Policy: A New Feminist Analysis*, 7.

¹⁴² McPhail, “A Feminist Policy Analysis Framework,” 45.

¹⁴³ Benadum, “Why it is Important to Celebrate 13th Amendment?,” accessed on December 1, 2019, <https://www.endslaverynow.org/blog/articles/why-it-is-important-to-celebrate-the-13th-amendment>

¹⁴⁴ Tsesis, “Gender Discrimination and the Thirteenth Amendment,” 1656.

and attend the proceedings at the court. The legal provision empowered women along with men.¹⁴⁵

4.4.2 Policy Analysis of Second Wave Feminism

The period before the Equal Rights amendment was known for the experiences of sex-based pay discrimination in every job and the employers used to treat women with subjugating and discriminatory manners even during their pregnancy periods.¹⁴⁶ The amendment prohibited pay differences, ensured equal treatment and better conditions for pregnant workers and granted freedom to make choices about one's own body.¹⁴⁷ In ERA too we see that women become the focal point and the amendments capacitated women in different manners.

4.4.3 Policy Analysis of Third Wave Feminism

VAWA was instrumental in prosecuting individuals for crimes and offered funds and services to the victims and survivors. As an effect of VAWA, the rate of intimate partner violence in US came down to 64%.¹⁴⁸ By changing the insensitivities and improper practices that existed in the legal system, the legislation stood for the women victims.¹⁴⁹ Victims of violence were given the right response through the VAWA enactments.

¹⁴⁵ Elizabeth Cady Stanton believed that the subordination of Blacks and women was interlinked: "The negro's skin and the woman's sex are both prima facie evidence that they were intended to be in subjection to the white Saxon man." Brown, *Great American Political Thinkers 11*, 6-7.

¹⁴⁶ Grabenhofer, "Is the Equal Rights Amendment Relevant in the 21st Century?," accessed on December 3, 2019, <https://now.org/resource/is-the-equal-rights-amendment-relevant-in-the-21st-century/>

¹⁴⁷ Bleiweis, "The Equal Rights Amendment: What You Need to Know," accessed on December 3, 2019, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/01/29/479917/equal-rights-amendment-need-know/>

¹⁴⁸ Aday, "The Effectiveness of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in Creating System Level Change," 11.

¹⁴⁹ Roe, "The Violence Against Women Act and Its Impact on Sexual Violence Public Policy: Looking Back and Looking Forward," accessed on November 29, 2019, <https://vawnet.org/sites/default/files/assets/files/2016-12/VAWA-SVPubPol.pdf>

4.4.5 Policy Analysis of Nirbhaya Policy

The provisions of Nirbhaya policy made anti-rape laws and punishments for sexual violence crimes severe.¹⁵⁰ It also had a significant strike in reporting the assaults against women. Between the periods of 2013-2015, the disclosure of rape cases were 23% more than the years from 2001 to 2011.¹⁵¹ Once the women seek protection under the legal system, it is found that they are not re-victimized. The policy also helped to conduct healthy debates on women's autonomy and rights.¹⁵²

4.5 Feminist Policy Making and Feminist Policy Analysis with Miranda Fricker

I would like to associate the aspect of feminist policy making with the epistemic recognition theory of Miranda Fricker. Epistemic recognition theory is applied to three levels: level of epistemic self-confidence, epistemic responsibility and epistemic self esteem.¹⁵³ A person who undergoes abuses will lose trust in oneself and will not be able to interact with others positively. A person who undergoes the experiences of denial of rights will fail to respect oneself and it will result in negative interactions with others. Those who are degraded by others have the difficulty for self-realization and the degrading affects their self-esteem. To rectify these evils, policy making should look for promoting the self-confidence of the epistemic subject in their own right. In ACF, people get a chance to convert their beliefs into policy which would indeed help them to develop their self-confidence.

¹⁵⁰ Lapsia, "Impact of the Nirbhaya Rape Case: Isolated Phenomenon or Social Change?," 27. https://opencommons.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1458&context=srhonors_theses

¹⁵¹ Bhatnagar et al. "Sparking the #MeToo Revolution in India: Delhi's 'Nirbhaya' Case," *Ideas for India for more Evidence Based Policies*, accessed on April 29, 2019.

¹⁵² Mahajan, "Nirbhaya Case: A Stir for Legal Reforms and Cry for Women's Rights and Autonomy," accessed on January 4, 2020, <https://www.news18.com/news/india/opinion-nirbhaya-case-a-stir-for-legal-reforms-and-cry-for-womens-rights-and-autonomy-1805617.html>

¹⁵³ Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice and Recognition Theory: A New Conversation Afterwards," 2.

When the credibility of the subjected is doubted by the community, the subject suffers loss of epistemic self-respect. The community has the obligation to affirm them by offering a sense of solidarity with them. It is possible for a person who suffers loss of self-esteem due to the evaluative degradation of others to feel insecure. When self-esteem is lost due to it, person may question one's own orientation to the world. Epistemic recognition theory looks for presenting self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem through genuine interpersonal relationships.¹⁵⁴ It believes that the goal of the theory can be attained through social relations and arrangements that encourage nurture and protect the victims. As ACF promotes and provides platforms for forming coalitions in order to share their beliefs and to work with an attitude of co-operation, it could be relied on to implement the project of epistemic recognition. The views of Fricker and the practices of ACF affirm the necessity of practices and ways of relating that support epistemic confidence, self-respect and self-esteem.

Fricker also proposes for the necessity to develop corrective virtues and actions in order to neutralize the influence of prejudices.¹⁵⁵ Policies could be considered as the corrective action that combat epistemic injustices and other discriminatory practices.

Conclusion

Advocacy Coalition Framework supports the use of beliefs which is the product of experience and testimony. It goes well along with the modus operandi of hashtags too. As trust development is necessary for receiving the testimony, trust is also important in collective action that follows ACF. Development of trust can be there as the people start sharing their beliefs. Fruitful coalition interactions promote greater trust,

¹⁵⁴ Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice and Recognition Theory: A New Conversation Afterwards," 5.

¹⁵⁵ Dieleman, "An Interview with Miranda Fricker," 260.

according to ACF. ACF and feminist hashtags assist in adding the perspectives and opinions of the people under consideration. They promote participatory knowledge which challenge the power structures and empower the people. Drawing on the base of experiential knowledge, both are able to present significant sights on the problems under discussions. Fricker points out clearly on how power structures hinder in including the voices of the powerless in the policy. ACF and hashtags could be the right aids that promote free discourse in decision making process. They can heighten the voices of the weak and assure the weak justice through recognition.

When there is multiple knowledge founts for policy making, policy makers will be careful in integrating diverse types of knowledge. This will help the policy makers to look for different frameworks to execute the policy.

General Conclusion

The representative feminist writers of each wave were suggesting for a space where women can raise their concerns. In the first three waves they made use of that space for writing and reviewing books and towards the end of the third wave and in the fourth wave they entered into the cyber space where they can raise their concerns. Social position has a role in the formation and restriction of knowledge. There is a philosophical advantage when we include the members of subjugated group in our deliberations. When the dominant social locations do not serve the interests of the marginalized, the virtual space provides an area where the marginalized can raise their concerns. This space is an aid to break their silence. The communication that are done making use of this space, if listened to properly will promote philosophizing from a feminist perspective.

I would like to make four observations, as I conclude the thesis: 1) A study on the epistemological relevance of hashtag feminism enhances the development of social epistemology, 2) It invites our attention to re-reflect on the concept of objectivity, 3) It empowers feminist movements and women, and 4) A study on feminist hashtags with Miranda Fricker's doctrines open a new direction into hashtag feminism.

Firstly, Hashtag feminism magnifies the development of social epistemology. Assessing knowledge as a concept that basically deals with questions about how one should go about with reasoning and mould beliefs, Haslanger suggests that we need to think about whether we require the idea of knowledge at all or whether the idea of knowledge is cherished by human beings. According to her, an appropriate definition

of knowledge will depend on an account of what is cognitively precious to human beings and will help the human beings to take up moral and political issues.¹⁵⁶

Dominant social locations do not serve the interests of those who do not engross that location.¹⁵⁷ This idea of situated knowledge paves way for the idea of epistemic privilege. Using the social location of cyberspace, the members of the hashtag group contribute to knowledge by tweeting or tagging themes that are sensitive to them. In that way they upheld the interests of those who are left out from the social locations. By doing that they challenge the claims that those are oppressed do not always understand or see the structures that oppress them.

Feminist hashtags as an instrument that provides knowledge could be considered as a collective epistemic agent. In them, we have individual epistemic subject who makes use of the beliefs and assertions of others in order to form one's perspective on a certain question or theme. Groups are formed through the medium of hashtags in order to find facts. The formed groups have their own beliefs on the issue under consideration. Any attempt from a knowledge seeker in order to assess the justifiedness of the themes or questions of the feminist hashtag community is an entrance into the social side of the epistemological aspect. According to the opinion of Alwin Goldman, social epistemology offer answers to the theoretical problems that the theorists in the particular would like to have. It also gives directive principles in the day today activities of belief forming. In the interpersonal level it gives instruction to the epistemic agent to revise one's own belief in order to attain a true belief. It can also give direct the epistemic agent to follow doxastic steps that bring out justified

¹⁵⁶ Haslanger, "What Knowledge Is and What It Ought to Be: Feminist Values and Normative Epistemology," 459–480.

¹⁵⁷ Crasnow, "Contemporary Standpoint Theory: Tensions, Integrations and Extensions," 192.

belief in the circumstances. Though the revision of one's own belief aspect is not that evident in the feminist hashtags, they bring out justified belief in the circumstances.

Trust is key element among the members of the community. The members of the community assume that the other members of the community know something and they are knowledge providers. It is true in the daily life situations also. We as human beings connected to one another in multiplex epistemic dependence tie-ups. Trust is comforted and fortified by the feeling of dependence on others. To get knowledge from something that is beyond our immediate experience we need to have trust. It is difficult to get set of distinct evidence on the reliability of our informants before accepting their testimony. In order to obtain knowledge, we then have to accept their words without particular set of evidences. The dependableness of members of epistemic communities is a great source of our knowledge. The members of the hashtag groups while share their testimony, they manifest trust. As inquirers, if we deposit trust in their testimony, it will bring about an interpersonal relationship with the informant and it will lead the inquirer into a joint commitment with the informant. The feminist #WhyIStayed narrations on domestic violence will then provide a plan of action for philosopher to bring about changes in the society.

Secondly, hashtag feminism helps in re-molding the notion of objectivity. Scientific research has investigated the phenomena of interest to masculine and politically dominant interests and how it has framed research questions. Concept of objectivity must be isolated from accounts of social relations in order to gain the value neutrality that is the necessary basis for unbiased judgments. Sandra Harding¹⁵⁸ advocates for starting researches by taking into consideration the interests of and lived experiences of people who have traditionally been left out of the institution of knowledge

¹⁵⁸ Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is "Strong Objectivity"?", 49-82.

production including women and marginalized communities.¹⁵⁹ This view point has been left out in the production of knowledge. When neglected people are included in the parameters of knowledge production it takes a radical shift¹⁶⁰ in knowledge production. It can remove the partialities and biases in knowledge production. Here too feminist hashtags attain significance as it promotes to begin researches from the daily lives of women.¹⁶¹

One of the recent tweets in #RapeCultureIsWhen was associated with Greta Thunberg. In one of the business stickers of Alberto Oil Company, the company presented Greta Thunberg, a teenager and a climate activist as being sexually assaulted. When this life experience of a teenage woman was tweeted, we see the immediate reactions that are significant in revealing the partialities and biases in the society. Dave Vescio tweeted on March 1, 2020 that it was a typical example of the mindset up the dominant society that the female could be made use of for business promotion. The tweet also points to the apathy of the society by quoting the words of the General Manager of the company who stated that the sticker is merely an image and it does not show a child. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police was of the opinion that the sticker was did not meet the criteria for a criminal offense even though the Canadian law was otherwise. The Feminist Next Door makes the appraisal of this particular experience as “Men love to laughingly remind us that if we speak out, we deserve what is coming to us.”

¹⁵⁹ According to Harding, Strong objectivity is not about only marginal lives as “enables us to understand women's lives, men's lives, and the relations between the two through concepts and hypotheses arising from women's lives rather than only ones arising from the lives of those assigned administrative/managerial work, a group that includes sociologists and philosophers. The point is to produce systematic causal accounts of how the natural and social orders are organized such that the everyday lives of women and men, our activities and beliefs, end up in the forms that they do.” Harding, “Strong Objectivity”: A Responses to the New Objectivity Question,” 342-343.

¹⁶⁰ Brister, “Objectivity in Sciences: The Impact of Feminist Accounts,” 217.

¹⁶¹ According to Sandra Harding, “start research from outside the dominant conceptual frameworks – namely in the daily lives of oppressed groups such as women.” See Harding, *Objectivity and Diversity: Another Logic of Scientific Research*, 30.

Interestingly, Greta Thunberg responded to it saying “They are starting to get more and more desperate...This shows we are winning.”

Exploring into feminist hashtags is an attempt to recognize these neglected perspectives. This objectivity shows a renewed interest in the marginalized others. Moreover, the traditional research questions which are structured by dominant groups (in the case of the example of Greta Thunberg, the power of the Oil Company) get unveiled by pursuing this objectivity. In fact it leads to the development of knowledge fulfilling the reflections of Longino. In the words of Longino, whenever women try to present the dominant structures of the society, she encounters them as subject and as object at the same time. There she can become aware of the gulf between the narration of herself and at the same time she is entering into the world where she undertake the task of knowledge production and the awareness of her experience as woman.¹⁶²

Lorraine Code suggests that often objectivity requires considering and adapting subjectivity¹⁶³ into account. Code connects objectivity¹⁶⁴ with her idea that the sex of the knower is important. She adopts different methods to fight against the idea that if the knower is female, she cannot be objective and cannot have the standing as a knower. She argues in favour of subjective knowledge. She exposes the value-ladenness in objectivity and proposes the idea that knowledge should be relative to the situation.

¹⁶² Longino, “In Search of Feminist Epistemology,” 474.

¹⁶³ Code, *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and Construction of Knowledge*, 31.

¹⁶⁴ For Code, “Objectivity, quite precisely construed, is commonly regarded as a defining feature of knowledge per se. So if women's knowledge is declared to be naturally subjective, then a clear answer emerges to my question. The answer is that if the would-be knower is female, then her sex is indeed epistemically significant, for it disqualifies her as a knower in the fullest sense of the term.” Code, “What Can She Know?”, 10.

Feminist hashtags uphold this attitude. Hashtags are a representation of the subjective experience of the members. The captions and narrations express the nature of the members and the interests in the explorations.¹⁶⁵ They also unveil the emotional involvement and assumptions of the members. The #RapeCultureIsWhen is a presentation of the subjective experiences of the members. The nature and background of the members suggest that they are against any forms of exploitations. When they state their opinions, the opinions are highly charged with emotions.

The emotional involvement from the part of the members could be seen in the presentation of the experience of Greta Thunberg from Alberto Oil Company. Emotionally charged Sarah Halls called for retweet and signing a petition to remove the executives of the company. Lazy Hooper deplors the way child pornography is used as a marketing strategy and mocked at the insensibility of the General Manager's by restating his belittling statement. They continued their emotional statements until the apology of the Company on the issue was published.

Longino offers the suggestion that doing epistemology as feminist is equal to participating in the questions of epistemology. In the past epistemic concepts like objectivity and rationality were defined in terms of masculinity. When epistemology is done from the view point of the feminist, one upholds the idea that excluding women as knowledge generator will exclude the analysis of knowledge and capacities peculiar to women. When women are left in that manner, it will cause the *shrinking* of the idea

¹⁶⁵ Code proposes for considering the cultural, historical and material circumstances of the inquirers for objectivity. Moreover, the nature and interests of the inquirers are also necessary for objectivity. See Code, "Taking Subjectivity into Account," 26.

of knowledge.¹⁶⁶ Once the feminine aspect is accepted, it will pave the way for the building up of knowledge and other unearthed possibilities.

Thirdly, hashtag feminism empowers women and feminist movement. Empowerment is a core concept that is discussed in association with different social realities. Whatever may be the social realities, when we attach the word empowerment with it, we mean to have a change that betters the social reality in consideration. This change is viewed in terms development. Amartya Sen opines that the characteristic feature of human development¹⁶⁷ is not an exercise of evaluation on the economic progress. Human development depends on a methodical exploration into the fact of how human beings are living in a particular society. When one explores into that he meets with shattered and broken human lives. It means recognition of deprivations suffered by human beings is a prerequisite for development or empowerment. Secondly, there should be initiatives from the part of the people to remove blocks in order to achieve well-being.¹⁶⁸ Hashtag based feminist policy making and policy analysis work toward recognizing the deprivations suffered by the marginalized and the initiatives to make sure the progress of the marginalized.

Finally, the reflections of Miranda Fricker are of great advantage in disclosing feminist epistemology that revolves around feminist hashtags. Slogans and hashtags are used in the feminist history to break the silence. Imposed silence of Fricker makes the weak unheard whereas the attentive silence presents the listener with a way to philosophize – philosophizing by gaining knowledge from the silenced. Attentiveness to hashtags helps us philosophizing from the side of the subjugated. Attentiveness to

¹⁶⁶ Longino, "In Search of Feminist Epistemology," 475.

¹⁶⁷ Sen, "A Decade of Human Development," 17-23.

¹⁶⁸ Anthony, "Do We Need to Challenge or Change the Perspective?: A Re-Reading of the Feminist Metaphysics," 49-50.

epistemic practices guides us to epistemic difference and the components involved in knowledge production. Hashtag as an epistemic practice unveils the role of power in knowledge production.

Fricker points out how power operates in social situatedness and the necessity and courage to ask who is controlling whom. Feminist hashtags expresses the audacity to question the power structures. When the subject is dishonored as the giver of knowledge and when their ability for social understanding is defamed, the subject is wronged in their ability as an epistemic subject. Through the method of hashtags, the dishonored and defamed epistemic subject manifests the discriminations faced by him/her. The analysis of them unveils the role of power of the dominant one. For a hermeneutically marginalized subject, hashtag is a medium to generate meanings related to social life.

According to Fricker, When disparities and prejudices hinder the circulation of knowledge what we need is a good informant who is epistemically and ethically credible. One who makes use of the hashtags in the role of good informant, whatever he/she communicates are not hindered by the traces of insincerity; s/he is able to develop an inter-relationship between the inquirer and the hearer as fellow epistemic agent and testifies with evidence. The characteristic features attributed to good informant by Fricker, the features competence, trustworthiness and indicator properties,¹⁶⁹ can also function as the corrective measures in the use of hashtags. Fricker's vision of joint commitment in testimony is actualized, in the creation of hashtag groups. Feminist policy making is an epistemic recognition and a corrective action.

This study has explored feminist hashtags from an epistemological perspective. Through the lens of Miranda Fricker, it has identified the relevance of feminist

¹⁶⁹ Fricker, "Rational Authority and Social Power: Towards a Truly Social Epistemology," 162-63.

hashtags in knowledge production. Epistemology is a vast area with various notions of knowledge and lacking an investigation into all the aspects associated with knowledge is a limitation of the thesis. The study did not also look into the presence of fake hashtags on social media that hinders knowledge production. The motivation behind creating and sharing fake information and whether they are epistemically relevant need to be explored in future studies.

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