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Dangers of Living in a Connected World: The Gendered Cyber Space and the Indian Tale

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Abstract: *Crimes against women form a crucial part of cybercrimes in India, and the online platform is now the new platform where women's dignity, privacy, and security are increasingly being challenged. Trolling, abusing, threatening, stalking, voyeurism, body-shaming, defaming, surveillance, revenge porn, and other forms of indecent representation of women are rampant in the cyber world. The promises of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and laws against cybercrime generated hopes about gender neutrality of digital technology. This article interrogates the disembodied character, neutrality, and gender blindness of cyberspace. It highlights the more profound point of making women's bodies the target for commodification and their body parts subject to a virtual male gaze, thus, continually re-erecting a new-fangled gendering process through cyberspace in the zenith of globalization. The purpose, at the same time, is to debunk the myth of 'gender neutrality that digital technology is pure and neutral and hence free from any sexual and gendered implication, taking India as an example.*

Keywords: Cybercrimes, Digital technology, Globalization, Digitalization and Gendered cyberspace

Introduction

Yanisky-Ravid and Mittelman (2016), in one of their papers published in *Fordham Intellectual Property, Media, and Law Journal*, made a profound observation about the nature of cyberspace. They said that "The virtual sphere is theoretically blind to gender, age, race, disabilities, and country of origin; any user can create content without limitation on the number of websites, blogs, and Facebook accounts. Even the government cannot completely control or resist the content. With the rise of the Internet, a new sphere was created: beyond borders, beyond total governmental control, beyond regulations, and almost any limitation" (p. 385). In 2005, Thomas Friedman, in his *World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* made a statement of similar significance. Friedman said that "There has never been a time in history when human imagination wasn't important, but writing this book tells me that it has never been more important than now because *in a flat world*, so many of the tools of collaboration are becoming commodities available to everyone. There is one thing, though, that has not and can never be commoditized, and that is imagination—what content we dream of creating" (Friedman, 2005, pp. 608-9). Hence, "digital globalization, defined largely by flows of data and information, is a new form of globalization brings about relevant changes regarding how business is done across borders, the flow of economic benefits, and broadening participation. The growth of data and information related to digital globalization determines that global economic, financial, and social connections increase through digital platforms" (Schilirò, 2018). With ground-breaking developments in biotechnologies and digitalization, promises began to loom large that the so-called umbilical connection between technology and male prerogative has been finally disconnected. Apparently, new technologies accompany new mantras of change, and the cyber gurus avow that the digital futures would be very different, eliminating many inequalities, including gender inequalities. The promises of Information and Communication Technologies generated hopes and aspirations that they will truly empower women and transform gender relations (Kemp and Squires, 1998; Green and