



## Reimagining Feminist Pedagogy in the Digital Age: Cyber Feminism in Indian Higher and Teacher Education under NEP 2020

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**Abstract:** *The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a transformative framework for Indian higher and teacher education through digitalization, inclusivity, and multidisciplinary learning. Within this changing educational landscape, feminist pedagogy acquires renewed significance in addressing gendered inequalities embedded in digital access, technological participation, and knowledge production. This paper explores the relevance of cyber feminism as a critical theoretical approach to understanding the intersection of gender, technology, and education in contemporary India. Cyber feminism challenges patriarchal structures within digital spaces and advocates for equitable participation of women in virtual learning environments, academic discourse, and technological engagement.*

*The study critically examines how NEP 2020 promotes digital learning while simultaneously exposing structural barriers such as the digital gender divide, socio-economic disparities, linguistic exclusion, and limited technological accessibility for women, particularly from marginalized communities. It further investigates the role of feminist pedagogy in reconstructing teacher education through inclusive, democratic, and gender-sensitive digital practices. By emphasizing women's agency, representation, and participation in online educational spaces, the paper argues that cyber feminism can contribute significantly to the democratization of higher education in India.*

*The paper adopts an analytical and interdisciplinary approach by integrating feminist theory, educational policy analysis, and digital pedagogy studies. It concludes that the successful implementation of NEP 2020 requires not only technological advancement but also a feminist reorientation of educational practices to ensure equality, accessibility, and empowerment in the digital age.*

**Keywords:** *Cyber Feminism, NEP 2020, Feminist Pedagogy, Digital Education, Higher Education, Teacher Education, Gender Equality.*

**1. Introduction:** The twenty-first century has witnessed a rapid transformation in the field of education through the expansion of digital technologies, online learning platforms, and virtual communication systems. In India, the growth of digital infrastructure and technological accessibility has significantly influenced the structure of higher and teacher education. The integration of technology into education has become more prominent after the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes flexibility, accessibility, multidisciplinary learning, and digital inclusion. However, the increasing dependence on digital education has also exposed existing inequalities related to gender, class, region, and socio-economic status. Within this context, feminist discourse becomes essential for examining how technology shapes educational participation and representation. Cyber feminism emerges as an important

theoretical framework that critiques patriarchal structures within digital spaces while advocating women's agency, equality, and visibility in technologically driven educational systems. Thus, the relationship between digital education, NEP 2020, and cyber feminism forms a critical area of contemporary academic inquiry.

**Concept of Digital Education in India:** Digital education in India refers to the use of technological tools, online platforms, virtual classrooms, artificial intelligence, and internet-based resources in the teaching-learning process. It aims to create flexible and accessible educational opportunities beyond traditional classroom boundaries. The Indian educational system has increasingly adopted digital modes of learning through initiatives such as SWAYAM, DIKSHA, e-Pathshala, and virtual learning environments. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the shift toward online education, making digital learning an unavoidable component of academic life. While digital education offers opportunities for innovation, accessibility, and collaborative learning, it also reflects deep social inequalities. Limited internet access, lack of digital literacy, economic disparities, and gender-based restrictions continue to affect equal participation in digital learning environments. In many parts of India, women and girls face greater obstacles in accessing technological resources due to patriarchal social structures and unequal distribution of digital opportunities. Therefore, digital education in India remains both a transformative and contested space.

**Overview of NEP 2020:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a major reform in the Indian education system aimed at modernizing and restructuring education according to global and technological developments. It promotes multidisciplinary learning, skill development, digital integration, flexibility in curriculum, and inclusive educational practices. NEP 2020 recognizes technology as a central tool for expanding educational access and improving the quality of learning. The policy encourages online education, digital content creation, virtual laboratories, teacher training in digital pedagogy, and the use of educational technology across institutions. It also emphasizes equity and inclusion by addressing the educational needs of marginalized communities and disadvantaged groups. However, despite its progressive vision, critics argue that the policy does not sufficiently address structural inequalities related to gender and digital accessibility. The implementation of digital reforms without adequate infrastructural and social support may deepen the existing digital divide. From a feminist perspective, NEP 2020 must therefore be critically examined to understand whether its digital framework genuinely promotes gender equality and democratic participation in higher and teacher education.

**Emergence of Cyber Feminism in Educational Discourse:** Cyber feminism emerged during the late twentieth century as a theoretical and political movement that explored the relationship between women, technology, cyberspace, and digital culture. It challenges the male-dominated nature of technological systems and seeks to create inclusive digital spaces where women can participate equally in knowledge production, communication, and representation. In educational discourse, cyber feminism has become increasingly relevant with the expansion of online learning and virtual academic environments. It examines how digital education can both empower and marginalize women depending on issues of access, representation, and institutional support. Cyber feminism advocates the use of technology as a means of resistance against patriarchal control and gender-based exclusion within educational institutions. In the Indian context, cyber feminist perspectives are particularly important because digital education often reflects broader social hierarchies based on gender, caste, class, and region. By incorporating feminist pedagogy into digital learning practices, cyber feminism seeks to democratize education, encourage critical thinking, and ensure gender-sensitive participation in higher and teacher education under NEP 2020.

**2. Conceptual Framework:** The conceptual framework of this study is based on the interconnected relationship between feminist pedagogy, cyber feminism, and digital knowledge production within contemporary education. These concepts provide a critical lens for analyzing how gender operates in digital educational spaces under NEP 2020. The framework emphasizes that education is not merely a process of knowledge transmission but also a site where power relations, representation, and social identities are

constructed and negotiated. In the digital age, feminist approaches become essential for understanding the opportunities and inequalities created by technological transformation in higher and teacher education.

**Feminist Pedagogy: Meaning and Features:** Feminist pedagogy refers to a teaching approach grounded in equality, participation, critical thinking, and social justice. It challenges traditional hierarchical systems of education that often marginalize women's voices and experiences. Feminist pedagogy promotes collaborative learning, democratic classroom interaction, and inclusive educational practices where students actively participate in knowledge creation. Its major features include gender sensitivity, empowerment, dialogue-based learning, and the recognition of diverse social identities such as caste, class, race, and gender. In digital education, feminist pedagogy seeks to create safe and inclusive virtual learning environments that encourage equal participation and critical engagement.

**Cyber Feminism: Theory and Development:** Cyber feminism emerged in the 1990s as a theoretical movement examining the relationship between women and digital technology. It critiques the patriarchal dominance of cyberspace and advocates women's equal access to technological resources and digital representation. Cyber feminists view technology as both a space of oppression and a potential tool for empowerment and resistance. The theory developed alongside the growth of the internet, virtual communication, and digital culture, highlighting how women can challenge traditional power structures through online participation and knowledge sharing. In education, cyber feminism focuses on women's digital inclusion, online agency, and the democratization of learning spaces.

**Gender and Digital Knowledge Production:** Digital knowledge production refers to the creation, sharing, and circulation of knowledge through digital platforms and technological systems. However, access to digital knowledge is often shaped by gendered social structures and inequalities. Women, especially from marginalized communities, frequently face barriers related to technology access, digital literacy, representation, and online participation. Gender influences whose knowledge is valued, represented, and circulated within digital educational spaces. Feminist scholars argue that digital education must address these inequalities to ensure equitable participation and inclusive knowledge production. Therefore, gender-sensitive digital practices are necessary for creating democratic and accessible educational systems under NEP 2020.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of cyber feminism in reimagining higher and teacher education under NEP 2020.
2. To analyze the impact of digital education on women's participation and representation in Indian academia.
3. To explore the challenges of the digital gender divide in higher and teacher education.
4. To evaluate the relevance of feminist pedagogy in digital teaching-learning practices.
5. To investigate how NEP 2020 promotes inclusivity, accessibility, and gender-sensitive education.

### 4. Significance of the Study

1. **Intersection of Gender, Technology, and Education:** The study highlights how digital technology influences educational opportunities and experiences differently for men and women in contemporary India. It examines the growing relationship between gender equality and technological advancement in higher education.
2. **Contribution to Feminist Educational Discourse:** The research contributes to feminist debates on digital learning, educational reforms, and women's participation in knowledge production. It expands the discussion of feminism within the context of technology-driven education under NEP 2020.

3. **Inclusive and Equitable Digital Pedagogy:** The study explores how digital pedagogy can become more inclusive, democratic, and accessible for students from diverse social and gender backgrounds. It evaluates the potential of NEP 2020 in promoting equitable educational practices.
4. **Women's Educational Empowerment in Virtual Spaces:** The research provides critical insights into how digital platforms can empower women through increased access to education, participation, communication, and academic visibility. It also examines the limitations women face in virtual learning environments.
5. **Need for Gender-Sensitive Policy Implementation:** The study emphasizes that educational reforms cannot succeed without addressing gender inequalities in digital access and participation. It suggests the importance of gender-sensitive implementation of NEP 2020 policies in higher and teacher education.

## 5. NEP 2020 and Digital Transformation in Education

**Digital Learning Policies and Reforms:** NEP 2020 recognizes technology as a central component of educational reform and promotes digital learning through online platforms, e-content development, and virtual educational resources. The policy aims to increase accessibility, flexibility, and quality in education through technological integration.

**Online Education and Virtual Classrooms:** The rise of online education and virtual classrooms has transformed the traditional teaching-learning process by enabling remote and flexible learning opportunities. Digital classrooms encourage wider participation, but they also reveal inequalities related to internet access, digital literacy, and technological infrastructure.

**Technology-Oriented Teacher Education:** NEP 2020 places strong emphasis on technologically trained educators who can effectively use digital tools and innovative teaching methods. Teacher education is being restructured to include digital pedagogy, online assessment, and technology-based instructional practices to meet contemporary educational needs.

## 6. Cyber Feminism and the Digital Gender Divide

**Access to Technology and Internet:** Cyber feminism draws attention to unequal access to digital devices, internet connectivity, and technological resources among women. Economic limitations, social restrictions, and gender bias often prevent women from fully participating in digital education.

**Gendered Exclusion in Digital Spaces:** Digital educational spaces are not always gender-neutral, as women frequently experience marginalization, underrepresentation, and online discrimination. Cyber feminism critiques these patriarchal structures and advocates equal participation and visibility for women in virtual learning environments.

**Rural-Urban and Socio-Economic Disparities:** The digital divide is deeply connected to regional and socio-economic inequalities. Women from rural areas and marginalized communities often face greater barriers in accessing digital education due to poverty, lack of infrastructure, and limited technological awareness.

**Representation of Women in Digital Academia:** Cyber feminism emphasizes the importance of women's representation in digital academic spaces, online knowledge production, and educational leadership. Equal visibility and participation are necessary for creating inclusive and democratic digital educational systems under NEP 2020.

**7. Feminist Pedagogy in Higher and Teacher Education:** Feminist pedagogy plays a significant role in transforming higher and teacher education by promoting equality, participation, critical consciousness, and

inclusive learning practices. In the digital age, feminist pedagogy becomes increasingly important as educational systems are shaped by technology-oriented teaching-learning methods under NEP 2020. It challenges traditional hierarchical models of education and seeks to create democratic and gender-sensitive academic spaces where all learners can participate equally.

**Inclusive Teaching-Learning Practices:** Inclusive teaching-learning practices are central to feminist pedagogy because they recognize diversity in terms of gender, caste, class, language, region, and socio-economic background. Feminist pedagogy rejects one-dimensional and authoritarian teaching methods and instead encourages participatory and student-centered learning. In higher and teacher education, inclusive digital pedagogy ensures that educational resources and opportunities are accessible to students from marginalized communities, especially women.

The rise of online education has created new possibilities for flexible and accessible learning. Digital platforms provide opportunities for women who may face social or geographical restrictions in attending physical institutions. Virtual classrooms, recorded lectures, and online learning resources can support women's educational continuity and participation. However, inclusion is not only about access to technology but also about representation, voice, and equal participation in academic discussions.

Feminist pedagogy therefore emphasizes collaborative learning, dialogue-based interaction, critical thinking, and experiential knowledge. It values women's lived experiences and challenges patriarchal assumptions within curriculum and classroom practices. In teacher education, inclusive pedagogy prepares future educators to adopt gender-sensitive teaching methods and create equitable learning environments in both physical and digital classrooms.

**Democratic Classroom and Digital Participation:** Feminist pedagogy promotes the idea of the classroom as a democratic space where authority is shared and students actively participate in the learning process. Traditional education systems often operate through hierarchical relationships in which teachers are viewed as the sole producers of knowledge while students remain passive recipients. Feminist pedagogy challenges this structure by encouraging dialogue, cooperation, and mutual learning.

In the digital age, democratic participation extends into virtual educational spaces such as online classrooms, discussion forums, webinars, and digital academic platforms. Digital technology can create opportunities for wider participation by allowing students to express opinions, share experiences, and engage in collaborative learning regardless of physical location. Women who may feel marginalized in traditional classroom settings can sometimes find greater confidence and visibility in online learning environments.

However, digital participation also reflects existing social inequalities. Women often face technological barriers, online discrimination, and unequal access to digital resources, which limit their active engagement in virtual education. Feminist pedagogy seeks to address these inequalities by advocating equal digital access, supportive learning environments, and inclusive participation. Democratic digital education requires educational institutions to ensure safe and respectful online spaces where women's voices and perspectives are equally valued.

**Women's Agency and Empowerment through Education:** One of the most important objectives of feminist pedagogy is the empowerment of women through education. Education is viewed not merely as a means of acquiring knowledge but as a transformative process that enables women to develop critical awareness, self-confidence, leadership, and social participation. Feminist pedagogy encourages women to question social inequalities, patriarchal norms, and systems of exclusion that limit their opportunities.

In the context of digital education, women's agency refers to their ability to access, use, and shape digital technologies for educational and intellectual development. Digital platforms provide opportunities for women to participate in academic discussions, research, online activism, and professional networking. Cyber

feminism particularly emphasizes the role of technology in creating spaces for women's visibility, expression, and resistance against patriarchal control.

Teacher education also plays a crucial role in empowering women educators by developing technological competence, leadership skills, and gender-sensitive teaching practices. Women teachers trained in digital pedagogy can become agents of educational transformation by promoting inclusive and democratic learning environments. Thus, feminist pedagogy contributes to the broader goal of social equality by enabling women to participate actively in educational and technological spaces.

**8. Challenges and Critical Concerns:** Despite the progressive vision of digital education under NEP 2020, several structural and social challenges continue to affect gender equality in higher and teacher education. These challenges reveal that technological advancement alone cannot guarantee inclusive and equitable education unless deeper social inequalities are addressed.

**Patriarchal Structures in Digital Education:** Digital education often reproduces patriarchal power relations present in society. Although technology is frequently presented as neutral and democratic, access to digital resources and participation in online learning are shaped by gendered social structures. In many families and communities, women's access to mobile phones, computers, and internet facilities remains restricted due to patriarchal control and traditional gender roles.

Women are also underrepresented in technological and academic leadership positions, which affects whose perspectives dominate digital educational spaces. Educational content, technological systems, and institutional policies may unconsciously reinforce gender stereotypes and masculine dominance. Feminist scholars argue that without critical intervention, digital education can replicate existing inequalities rather than eliminate them.

Cyber feminism therefore critiques the patriarchal nature of technological systems and calls for gender-sensitive educational reforms that prioritize women's inclusion, participation, and representation in digital academia.

**Linguistic and Cultural Barriers:** India's linguistic and cultural diversity creates significant challenges in the implementation of digital education. Most digital educational resources are produced in dominant languages such as English, which limits accessibility for students from regional and marginalized linguistic backgrounds. Women from rural and economically disadvantaged communities are often more affected by these barriers due to lower levels of digital literacy and educational exposure.

Cultural norms and social expectations also restrict women's participation in digital learning environments. In conservative social settings, women may face limitations on internet usage, online interaction, or participation in virtual educational spaces. These restrictions reduce opportunities for academic engagement and technological development.

Feminist pedagogy emphasizes the importance of culturally inclusive and multilingual educational practices to ensure equal participation for all learners. Without addressing linguistic and cultural inequalities, digital education may remain exclusionary rather than democratic.

**Cyber Harassment and Online Safety:** One of the major concerns associated with digital education is the issue of cyber harassment and online safety. Women frequently face trolling, bullying, stalking, harassment, and gender-based abuse in online spaces. Such experiences create fear, insecurity, and psychological stress, discouraging women from actively participating in digital educational environments.

The lack of effective institutional mechanisms for addressing online harassment further intensifies these problems. Many women hesitate to report cyber abuse due to social stigma, victim-blaming, or fear of

academic and social consequences. Cyber harassment therefore becomes a major obstacle to women's freedom, participation, and visibility in digital education.

Cyber feminism highlights the need for safe, ethical, and gender-sensitive digital environments. Educational institutions must adopt strong policies, awareness programs, and support systems to ensure online safety and equal participation for women students and educators.

**Limitations in Policy Implementation:** Although NEP 2020 promotes digital transformation and inclusive education, its implementation faces several practical limitations. Many educational institutions lack adequate technological infrastructure, internet connectivity, trained faculty, and financial resources required for effective digital education. These limitations are more severe in rural and underdeveloped regions.

The policy also does not sufficiently address gender-specific barriers related to digital access, online safety, and socio-cultural restrictions. Without targeted interventions for women and marginalized communities, the benefits of digital education may remain unevenly distributed.

Furthermore, the gap between policy vision and institutional reality creates challenges in achieving educational equality. Effective implementation of NEP 2020 requires gender-sensitive planning, digital literacy programs, infrastructural development, and inclusive educational policies that address the needs of disadvantaged groups.

**9. Analytical Discussion:** The analytical discussion of this study focuses on the relationship between cyber feminism, digital education, and the educational reforms introduced through NEP 2020. While the policy promotes technological modernization and inclusive education, feminist analysis reveals both possibilities and limitations within its implementation. The discussion critically examines whether digital transformation in Indian higher and teacher education can genuinely create gender-equal academic spaces.

**Critical Evaluation of NEP 2020 from a Feminist Perspective:** NEP 2020 is considered one of the most significant educational reforms in contemporary India because it emphasizes digital learning, flexibility, accessibility, and multidisciplinary education. The policy seeks to modernize higher and teacher education through technology-oriented reforms and online learning systems. From a feminist perspective, these reforms create opportunities for women's educational participation by expanding access to virtual learning environments and flexible educational structures.

However, feminist scholars argue that the policy framework does not sufficiently address structural inequalities related to gender, class, caste, and socio-economic status. The digital transformation promoted by NEP 2020 often assumes equal access to technology, internet connectivity, and digital literacy, which is not the reality for many women, particularly those from rural and marginalized communities. The digital gender divide continues to restrict women's participation in online education due to economic dependency, patriarchal control, and limited technological access.

Furthermore, the policy largely focuses on technological expansion without critically examining the gendered nature of digital spaces. Issues such as online harassment, unequal representation, and exclusion from technological decision-making remain insufficiently addressed. Therefore, while NEP 2020 presents a progressive vision of educational reform, its effectiveness depends on the inclusion of gender-sensitive strategies that recognize women's lived experiences and structural challenges in digital education.

**Cyber Feminism as a Tool for Educational Democratization:** Cyber feminism provides an important theoretical framework for understanding how digital technology can be used to democratize education and challenge patriarchal structures within academic spaces. It views cyberspace as both a site of exclusion and a potential space for resistance, empowerment, and knowledge production. Through online education, women

can gain access to academic resources, intellectual discussions, and educational opportunities beyond traditional social limitations.

In higher and teacher education, cyber feminism encourages the use of digital platforms for collaborative learning, critical dialogue, and inclusive participation. Online educational spaces can create opportunities for women to express their perspectives, engage in research, and participate actively in academic discourse. Digital education also allows greater flexibility for women who may face social or geographical barriers to physical classroom participation.

At the same time, cyber feminism critically examines the inequalities present within digital systems. Access to technology remains uneven, and online educational spaces often reproduce patriarchal power structures through gender discrimination and marginalization. Cyber feminist approaches therefore emphasize the need for inclusive digital policies, equal technological access, and democratic educational practices that ensure women's representation and participation.

By challenging male-dominated technological structures and promoting gender-sensitive digital pedagogy, cyber feminism contributes to the broader democratization of education. It transforms digital learning from a purely technological process into a socially inclusive and emancipatory educational practice.

**Reimagining Gender-Equal Digital Education in India:** Reimagining gender-equal digital education in India requires a critical transformation of educational policies, technological systems, and teaching-learning practices. Gender equality in digital education cannot be achieved solely through technological advancement; it also requires social awareness, institutional support, and inclusive educational frameworks.

One of the major requirements for gender-equal digital education is equal access to technological resources such as internet connectivity, digital devices, and online educational platforms. Women from rural, economically weaker, and marginalized communities must be provided with opportunities for digital participation and technological literacy. Educational institutions should adopt inclusive digital infrastructures that reduce barriers to women's academic engagement.

Teacher education also plays a crucial role in creating gender-equal educational environments. Teachers must be trained in feminist pedagogy, digital ethics, and inclusive teaching methods to ensure that virtual classrooms remain democratic and participatory spaces. Curriculum design should include gender-sensitive perspectives that challenge stereotypes and encourage critical awareness about inequality and representation.

Additionally, online educational spaces must become safer and more accessible for women. Institutional mechanisms should address cyber harassment, online discrimination, and gender-based violence in digital environments. Without ensuring safety and equality, digital education may reinforce existing social hierarchies rather than challenge them.

Therefore, reimagining digital education through feminist perspectives involves creating educational systems that combine technological innovation with social justice, equality, and democratic participation. Such an approach can contribute to a more inclusive and gender-sensitive educational future in India under NEP 2020.

## 10. Suggestions and Recommendations

**Gender-Inclusive Digital Policies:** Educational policies should incorporate gender-sensitive approaches to ensure equal access and participation in digital learning environments. Government and educational institutions must address the digital gender divide by providing technological resources, financial support, and inclusive educational opportunities for women and marginalized communities. Policy frameworks should also recognize the specific challenges faced by women in accessing online education and technological platforms.

**Digital Literacy Programs for Women:** Digital literacy is essential for women's educational empowerment in the digital age. Special training programs should be introduced to improve women's technological skills, internet awareness, and digital participation. Rural women and economically disadvantaged students require targeted support to reduce inequalities in digital education. Digital literacy initiatives can help women gain confidence, independence, and active participation in academic and professional spaces.

**Feminist Approaches in Teacher Training:** Teacher education programs should integrate feminist pedagogy and gender-sensitive teaching methods into their curriculum. Teachers must be trained to create inclusive and democratic digital classrooms where students from diverse backgrounds can participate equally. Training in digital ethics, gender awareness, and inclusive educational practices can help educators challenge discriminatory attitudes and support gender equality within academic spaces.

**Safe and Accessible Online Educational Spaces:** Educational institutions should develop strong mechanisms to ensure online safety and prevent cyber harassment, discrimination, and gender-based abuse in virtual learning environments. Clear institutional policies, awareness programs, and counseling support should be established to protect women's participation in digital education. Online educational platforms must also be designed to be accessible, inclusive, and user-friendly for students from diverse linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds.

**11. Conclusion:** The digital transformation of higher and teacher education under NEP 2020 has created both opportunities and challenges within the Indian educational system. While digital education promotes accessibility, flexibility, and technological advancement, it also exposes deep inequalities related to gender, socio-economic status, and digital access. In this context, cyber feminism emerges as an important theoretical and analytical framework for understanding the relationship between gender, technology, and education.

The study reveals that feminist pedagogy and cyber feminist perspectives are essential for creating inclusive, democratic, and gender-sensitive educational practices in the digital age. Although NEP 2020 emphasizes digital learning and educational reform, its successful implementation depends on addressing structural barriers such as the digital gender divide, online exclusion, cyber harassment, and unequal access to technological resources.

Cyber feminism contributes to the democratization of education by advocating women's participation, representation, and empowerment within digital academic spaces. Reimagining gender-equal digital education therefore requires not only technological innovation but also socially inclusive policies, feminist pedagogical approaches, and institutional commitment to equality and justice.

Ultimately, the future of digital higher and teacher education in India depends on the creation of educational systems that combine technological progress with gender sensitivity, accessibility, and democratic participation. Such an approach can help build a more equitable and transformative educational environment under NEP 2020.

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