

Applied Gender Studies: Media Literacies PYQ 2022

Q1. Are sex and gender roles fixed or fluid? Clarify your answer with suitable examples from your syllabus.

Ans. Sex and gender roles are not fixed; rather, they are fluid and can vary across cultures, societies, and historical contexts. Sex refers to the biological differences between male and female bodies, while gender roles are the societal expectations and behaviors associated with being male or female. While biological sex may be relatively stable, gender roles are socially constructed and can change over time.

Examples from History and Culture:

- 1. Women's Suffrage Movement:** In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the fight for women's suffrage challenged traditional gender roles. Women demanding the right to vote and participate in political processes challenged the fixed notion that women should only occupy domestic roles.
- 2. Rosie the Riveter:** During World War II, women in the United States entered the workforce in large numbers to fill roles traditionally held by men. The iconic "Rosie the Riveter" image symbolized women's ability to take on non-traditional roles during wartime.
- 3. Hijra Community in South Asia:** The hijra community in South Asia includes individuals who do not conform to traditional male or female gender roles. They have been a recognized and accepted part of certain cultures, highlighting the fluidity of gender identity beyond the binary.
- 4. LGBTQ+ Movement:** The LGBTQ+ movement challenges fixed notions of gender and sexuality. It emphasizes the diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations that do not conform to traditional binary roles.
- 5. Gender-Neutral Parenting:** Some parents today opt for gender-neutral parenting, allowing children to explore and express their interests and identities without being confined to traditional gender roles.
- 6. Changing Roles of Men:** In some societies, changing economic and social dynamics have led to shifts in men's roles, challenging traditional expectations. Men are becoming more involved in caregiving and household responsibilities.

These examples demonstrate that gender roles are not fixed; they can be influenced by social, cultural, economic, and political factors. While some societies may maintain stricter gender norms, others are embracing more fluid understandings of gender roles and identities. The recognition and acceptance of non-binary and transgender individuals also underscore the complexity and fluidity of gender. As societies evolve and perspectives change, so too can gender roles.

Q2. How do Meena Kandasamy's poems counter hegemonic narratives of gender and caste? Discuss with examples from poems in your syllabus.

Ans. Meena Kandasamy's poems counter hegemonic narratives of gender and caste through their powerful and often subversive exploration of these themes. Her poetry challenges dominant structures of power, exposing the injustices and inequalities perpetuated by gender and caste

hierarchies. She brings marginalized voices to the forefront and confronts societal norms that reinforce oppression.

Examples from Meena Kandasamy's Poems:

1. **"Caste and the Woman Writer"**: This poem directly addresses the intersection of gender and caste. Kandasamy challenges the notion that being a woman writer automatically erases caste privilege, emphasizing that caste discrimination persists even within the literary world. She writes, "Even my paper dreams carry a caste mark," highlighting how caste identity is inescapable.
2. **"The Art of Moustache"**: In this poem, Kandasamy's use of irony critiques the absurdity of patriarchal norms. She humorously describes how a woman can create a moustache using her eyeliner, exposing the performative nature of gender expectations. The poem defies the notion that certain characteristics are inherently tied to one's gender.
3. **"How to Spin Male Chauvinism"**: Kandasamy's poem takes a satirical approach to dismantle male chauvinism. She instructs women on how to counter such attitudes by outperforming men at their own games. This subverts the notion of women as passive victims and empowers them to challenge oppressive norms.
4. **"My Lover Speaks of Rape"**: In this powerful poem, Kandasamy addresses sexual violence and the victim-blaming culture that surrounds it. By giving voice to the survivor, the poem confronts the harmful narratives that perpetuate gender-based violence. It challenges the tendency to focus on what the survivor did wrong rather than holding the perpetrator accountable.
5. **"This is a Poem About 'Becoming a Brahmin'"**: Kandasamy's poem deconstructs the idea of social mobility and the caste system. The poem exposes the absurdity of the notion that one can "become" a Brahmin, challenging the rigidity of caste hierarchies and questioning the legitimacy of caste-based privilege.
6. **"Amaravathi" and "Coimbatore 1965"**: These poems focus on historical events and labor movements. They highlight the experiences of oppressed groups and the struggles they face against systemic injustices. By amplifying these stories, Kandasamy confronts dominant narratives that often overlook or undermine marginalized voices.

In all these examples, Meena Kandasamy's poems subvert hegemonic narratives by giving voice to the marginalized, challenging normative expectations, and exposing the deep-rooted inequalities that stem from gender and caste hierarchies. Her poetry disrupts the status quo, encourages critical reflection, and invites readers to question and resist oppressive structures.

Q3. What are the challenges faced by Indian masculinity according to Dasgupta and Gokulsingh?

Ans. Ranita Chatterjee Dasgupta and K. Moti Gokulsingh, in their analysis of Indian masculinity, highlight several challenges and complexities that Indian masculinity faces in the context of cultural, social, and historical factors. These challenges stem from traditional notions of masculinity, changing gender dynamics, and the evolving socio-economic landscape of India. **Some of the challenges they discuss include:**

1. **Traditional Gender Norms:** Traditional notions of masculinity in India are often rooted in patriarchy and reinforced by cultural expectations. Men are expected to adhere to certain ideals of strength, dominance, and control, which can be restrictive and limiting.

2. Pressure to Conform: Men may face pressure to conform to societal expectations of how they should behave, express emotions, and perform masculinity. Deviating from these norms can lead to social stigma and discrimination.

3. Changing Gender Dynamics: As women's roles and empowerment expand, men might feel challenged by shifts in power dynamics within households and society. This can create a sense of insecurity and resistance among some men.

4. Economic Challenges: Socio-economic changes, such as job instability and unemployment, can impact men's self-esteem and self-worth, especially in societies where traditional masculinity is linked to providing for the family.

5. Emotional Suppression: Traditional masculinity often discourages men from expressing vulnerability or emotions. This emotional suppression can lead to mental health issues, as men may struggle to communicate their feelings and seek support.

6. Identity Crisis: With changing social norms, men might face an identity crisis as they navigate new expectations while grappling with established ideals of masculinity.

7. Hegemonic Masculinity: The concept of hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant form of masculinity that marginalizes other expressions of manhood. Men who do not conform to this ideal may experience exclusion or discrimination.

8. Violence and Aggression: Some traditional notions of masculinity associate strength with aggression and dominance. This can contribute to a culture of violence and reinforce harmful behaviors.

9. Influence of Media: Media portrayals of masculinity often perpetuate unrealistic ideals, shaping perceptions of what it means to be a "real man." This can lead to dissatisfaction and a disconnect between reality and the media's portrayal.

10. Intersectionality: Men's experiences of masculinity are influenced by intersectional factors like class, caste, religion, and region. These factors can amplify or mitigate the challenges they face.

In their analysis, Dasgupta and Gokulsingh underline the complexities of Indian masculinity and its intersections with societal changes, gender dynamics, and power structures. They advocate for reimagining masculinity in a way that acknowledges diversity, challenges harmful stereotypes, and promotes healthy relationships and mental well-being.

Q4. Comment on how globalisation has affected gender representations in media according to Maitrayee Chaudhuri.

Ans. Maitrayee Chaudhuri, in her analysis of the impact of globalization on gender representations in media, highlights how the processes of globalization have both positive and negative effects on the portrayal of gender roles and identities. Globalization refers to the increasing interconnectedness of economies, cultures, and societies through technological advancements, trade, and cultural exchange. **Here's a commentary on how globalization has affected gender representations in media, based on Chaudhuri's perspective:**

1. Positive Effects:

- a. **Cultural Diversity:** Globalization has exposed people to a variety of cultural perspectives and narratives, leading to greater visibility of diverse gender identities and expressions in media. This has challenged traditional binary notions of gender and encouraged more inclusive representations.
- b. **Increased Visibility:** Globalization has facilitated the dissemination of information and stories from marginalized communities. This has led to increased visibility of gender-related issues that were previously marginalized or ignored by mainstream media.
- c. **Global Advocacy:** Global networks and platforms have allowed feminist and LGBTQ+ movements to connect and advocate for gender equality on an international scale. Media plays a role in amplifying these voices and raising awareness about gender issues.

2. Negative Effects:

- a. **Homogenization of Beauty Ideals:** Global media often promotes a narrow and Eurocentric standard of beauty, reinforcing traditional gender norms and reinforcing unattainable body ideals.
- b. **Stereotyping and Exoticization:** Some media representations perpetuate stereotypes and exoticize non-Western cultures and gender roles, reinforcing preconceived notions about gender identities in different societies.
- c. **Consumerism and Objectification:** Global media can promote consumerism and objectification, portraying women primarily as objects of desire or products to be consumed. This perpetuates harmful gender dynamics.
- d. **Cultural Appropriation:** In some cases, global media can appropriate cultural symbols and practices related to gender identity without understanding their significance, leading to misrepresentation and cultural insensitivity.

3. Hybridized Representations:

Chaudhuri also notes the emergence of hybridized gender representations resulting from the interplay of global and local influences. This can lead to complex narratives that challenge traditional gender norms while also reflecting the negotiation between global and local cultural values.

In conclusion, Maitrayee Chaudhuri's analysis highlights that globalization has brought both positive and negative effects on gender representations in media. While it has expanded the visibility of diverse gender identities and encouraged global advocacy for gender equality, it has also perpetuated harmful beauty ideals, stereotypes, and objectification. The interplay between global and local influences has led to hybridized gender representations that are complex and multifaceted.

Q5. Discuss with the help of the prescribed text from A. Revathy how heteronormative ideas flow through various structures including family to create discrimination and violence against trans people.

Ans. In A. Revathy's autobiographical text "The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story," she sheds light on how heteronormative ideas flow through various societal structures, particularly the family, and contribute to discrimination and violence against transgender individuals. Revathy's narrative

highlights the challenges faced by transgender individuals in India due to deeply ingrained heteronormative beliefs and norms. Here's how these ideas manifest and contribute to discrimination and violence, as illustrated in the text:

1. Heteronormative Family Dynamics:

In the text, Revathi describes her experiences growing up in a heteronormative family where traditional gender roles and expectations are enforced. Her family's inability to accept her gender identity and expression as a transgender person is rooted in their adherence to societal norms that prioritize cisgender and heterosexual identities.

2. Gendered Expectations and Norms:

Revathi's family, like many others in India, upholds traditional gender norms that dictate how individuals should dress, behave, and fulfill particular roles within the family and society. These norms create a rigid binary understanding of gender that excludes transgender individuals who don't conform to these expectations.

3. Role of Religion and Rituals:

Religious and cultural practices often reinforce heteronormativity. Revathi's experiences within religious rituals and ceremonies illustrate how transgender individuals are marginalized and excluded from traditional spaces due to their non-conformity to binary gender norms.

4. Social Stigma and Exclusion:

The text highlights how transgender individuals are ostracized and face extreme social stigma. This is exacerbated by the perception that transgender individuals deviate from the "norm," leading to isolation and a lack of social support.

5. Violence and Discrimination:

Revathi's narrative underscores how heteronormative ideas contribute to violence and discrimination against transgender individuals. She recounts instances of physical and emotional violence, public humiliation, and threats she faced due to her gender identity.

6. Economic Marginalization:

The text also portrays how transgender individuals often face economic marginalization due to discrimination in education and employment. This economic vulnerability further exacerbates their struggles and exposes them to further violence and exploitation.

7. Lack of Legal Protections:

Heteronormativity is reflected in legal frameworks that often fail to provide protections for transgender individuals. Revathi's journey to obtain legal recognition as a transgender person highlights the hurdles she faced due to a lack of recognition and understanding from authorities.

In summary, A. Revathi's autobiographical text "The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story" underscores how heteronormative ideas permeate various structures in Indian society, particularly the family, creating discrimination and violence against transgender individuals. These deeply ingrained norms and beliefs marginalize and exclude transgender people, leading to their social, economic, and psychological vulnerability. Revathi's narrative serves as a powerful testament to the

urgent need for societal change, education, and legal protections to challenge heteronormative biases and ensure the dignity and rights of transgender individuals.

Q6. What are the differences between how documentaries and feature films combat gender normativities? Compare and contrast any one documentary and a feature film from your syllabus.

Ans. Documentaries and feature films can both combat gender normativities, but they often do so through different approaches due to their distinct genres and purposes. While documentaries aim to provide a factual representation of real-life events or issues, feature films blend fiction and storytelling to convey messages and emotions. **Let's compare and contrast a documentary and a feature film from the syllabus in terms of how they combat gender normativities:**

Documentary: "India's Daughter" (2015) directed by Leslee Udwin

Approach: "India's Daughter" is a documentary that focuses on the brutal gang rape and murder of Jyoti Singh in Delhi in 2012, exploring the deeply entrenched gender norms and patriarchal attitudes that contributed to the crime.

Combating Gender Normativities:

Factual Exposure: The documentary exposes the harsh realities of gender-based violence and the misogyny that perpetuates it. It provides a platform for voices of survivors and activists to challenge societal norms.

Educational Aspect: By presenting real accounts and expert opinions, the documentary educates viewers about the systemic issues that enable gender-based violence, encouraging critical reflection and conversation.

Authentic Testimonies: "India's Daughter" features interviews with the convicts in the case, offering insight into the mindset shaped by deeply ingrained gender norms and attitudes.

Feature Film: "Parched" (2015) directed by Leena Yadav

Approach: "Parched" is a feature film that revolves around the lives of four women in rural India and explores themes of patriarchy, gender discrimination, and women's empowerment.

Combating Gender Normativities:

Narrative Fiction: As a feature film, "Parched" employs narrative storytelling to create fictional characters and situations that reflect the challenges faced by women in a patriarchal society. It offers a blend of drama, emotion, and storytelling to engage the audience.

Character Development: The film delves into the personal journeys of its female characters, depicting their struggles against societal norms and their determination to challenge and overcome these norms.

Emotional Connection: Through character arcs and emotional engagement, the film prompts viewers to empathize with the characters and reflect on the impact of gender normativities on their lives.

Comparison and Contrast:

Approach: While "India's Daughter" takes a documentary approach with a focus on factual accounts, "Parched" uses narrative fiction to create relatable characters and situations.

Engagement: Both documentaries and feature films engage viewers emotionally, but documentaries may have a stronger impact due to their real-life basis.

Educational Value: Documentaries like "India's Daughter" offer educational value by providing insights into real issues and expert perspectives. Feature films like "Parched" engage audiences emotionally and might prompt them to think critically about gender normativities through fictional characters and stories.

Influence: Documentaries often seek to raise awareness and incite activism, while feature films might contribute to changing cultural perceptions and discussions surrounding gender normativities.

In conclusion, both documentaries and feature films combat gender normativities in their own ways. Documentaries provide factual exposure and education, while feature films engage emotionally and encourage critical reflection through narrative fiction. "India's Daughter" and "Parched" exemplify these differences in their approaches and storytelling methods.