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on

“Gender, Culture and Society”

Date: 26th, 27th, and 28th November, 2022

Time: 10.00 AM (IST)

Abstracts of Resource Persons

Gender, Culture, and Social Media

**Prof. (Dr.) L. Ayu Saraswati, Professor in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, The
University of Hawai'i**

Abstract

This talk uncovers the shifting of gender and culture in our contemporary society by focusing on social media. Specifically, it addresses how emotions are processed on this platform that is governed by the neoliberal logic, and in turn changes how we experience and express ourselves and our culture. The case studies of this talk derive from Asian American feminist activists who conduct their ending violence against women campaign on social media

Bio-note: Dr. L. Ayu Saraswati is an award-winning author, award-winning teacher, engaging speaker, innovative consultant, and professor in women, gender, and sexuality studies at the University of Hawai'i. Prior to her current position, she was an assistant professor in women's studies at the University of Kansas, and a postdoctoral fellow in women's studies at Emory University. She is also part of the “EVERYBODY consulting” team. She received her PhD in women's studies from the University of Maryland, College Park. She lives in Honolulu.

Gender, Caste, and the #MeToo Movement in India

Dr. Anandita Pan, Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IISER
Bhopal

Abstract

The #MeToo has claimed to mark a ‘new era in Indian feminism’ by introducing feminist articulations into the quotidian through the powerful use of social media. The ‘sharing’ of survivor stories has served as a means to challenge the taboo of victimhood while also creating the possibility for solidarity. The #MeToo movement in India claims inheritance of previous movements such as the 2009 Pink Chaddi movement against moral policing, the 2011 Slut Walk movement against victim blaming, the 2015 Pinjra Tod movement against sexist curfew in hostels, and the 2017 Bekhauf Azadi. All these movements from which #MeToo claims heredity of, are movements proclaiming women’s right to access public space. Whose story-telling is more visible? Does identity in terms caste, class and gender play a role in determining subjecthood in the #MeToo movement? How do we confront the issues of who speaks for whom? Is solidarity achieved by acknowledging difference or by erasing it? In its focus on gender inequality and sexual violence, the #MeToo movement, ironically, reproduces casteist, classist and sexist hierarchies. What seems to drive the #MeToo movement in India is the anxiety regarding women’s confinement in the domestic sphere and the resultant inability to ‘speak’. Consequently, what underlies the movement are the desire to be visible in the public sphere and make their voices heard. This understanding categorically erases the issue of caste, and especially dalit women, whose life as well as oppression encompasses both private and public spaces. One, also, cannot deny the obvious classist implications in terms of access to technology and social media platforms. I will be examining the latent Brahmanism of the #MeToo movement in the way it erases dalit women.

Bio-note: Dr. Anandita Pan is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IISER Bhopal. She is the author of *Mapping Dalit Feminism: Towards an Intersectional Standpoint* (Sage-Stree, 2020) and co-editor of *Aesthetics in India: Transitions and Transformations* (Orient Blackswan. Forthcoming). She has published in *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, *South Asian Review*, and *Economic and Political Weekly* among others.

**Certainly: Gender Discourse in the Late Middle Ages: Literary Evidence
from Thirteenth-Century Germany and France, with an Emphasis on
Ulrich von Liechtenstein’s *Frauenbuch***

Prof Albrecht Classen, The University of Arizona, US

Abstract

There is hardly any other topic in world literature but love and hence the relationship between the genders. The high Middle Ages witnessed an enormous development of this topic in the courtly romances and courtly love poetry. But the ideals quickly faded, and they gave way to increasing criticism, doubts, and deep concerns. Already by the middle of the thirteenth century, new voices could be heard that seriously doubted the survival of the concept of courtly love, such as in the somewhat obscure and yet very insightful verse narrative *Frauenbuch* by Ulrich von Liechtenstein. There, knight and lady debate the downfall of the traditional values, examine the reasons why both men and women no longer perform properly, and what is really wrong at the courts. This perspective finds reflections in many other contemporary texts both in French and German literature. Our analysis will thus open the door to new social-historical perspectives regarding the aristocratic culture in the late Middle Ages.

Bio-note: Dr. Albrecht Classen is University Distinguished Professor of German Studies at the University of Arizona, Tucson. He has published currently 121 scholarly books on German and European medieval and early modern literature, most recently *Freedom, Imprisonment, and Slavery in the Pre-Modern Time* (2021), *Tracing the Trails in Medieval Literature* (Routledge, 2021), and *Wisdom from the European Middle Ages* (2022). In his other recent books, he explored the history of toleration and tolerance (2018 and 2020), prostitution in medieval literature (2019), the topics of the forest and of water in medieval literature (2015 and 2018), magic and magicians (2017), and the *Paradigm Shift* in the late Middle Ages (2019). He is the editor of the journals *Mediaevistik* and *Humanities Open Access*, and serves on many different boards of international journals dedicated to the Humanities. In 2004, he received the *Bundesverdienstkreuz am Band* (Order of Merit) from the German government. In 2012, he was awarded the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Arizona Professor of the Year Award. In 2017, he was given the rank of Grand Knight Commander of the Most Noble Order of the Three Lions (GKCL) for his contributions to teaching and researching German language, literature, and culture. He is also the author of nine volumes of his own poetry, of four volumes with his essays and satires, and of one book for young readers dedicated to the Middle Ages. In 2021 he won the Tulliola Renato Filippelli World Award for his prose

narratives, and also received the Chatfield Outstanding Tenured Researcher Award from the College of Humanities at the Univ. of Arizona.

He served for close to three decades as the President of the Arizona Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG); he was the Vice President/President/Past President of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association for four times, and he served twice on the Executive Board of the national AATG. Since 2021, he is Member of the Executive Board of the Arizona Humanities. He has received numerous research and teaching awards, especially the Five Star Faculty Award (2009), and several awards for his service as Director of Undergraduate Studies (2014 and 2015). In 2017, he received the rank of knighthood, as a Grand Knight Commander of the Most Noble Order of the Three Lions (Duke of Swabia). He is currently in Egypt as a Fulbright Scholar for Fall of 2022.

In Search of Primary Evidences

Prof. Zinia Mitra, Head of the Department & Professor, Department of Women's Studies,
University of North Bengal

Abstract:

What do we want from each other
after we have told our stories
do we want
to be healed ...

Audre Lorde, "There are no Honest Poems About Dead Women".

Francis Hart wrote in 'Notes of An Anatomy of Modern Autobiography' that "Confession" is personal history that seeks to communicate or - express the essential nature, the truth of the self. "Memoir" is a personal history that seeks to articulate or repossess the historicity of the self...memoir places the self relative to time, history, cultural pattern and change.¹ Autobiography is an account whose primary goal is truth and meaningfulness. Invoking Nietzsche, Paul de Man made an obstinate point: "Death is a displaced name for a linguistic predicament, and the restoration of mortality by autobiography . . . deprives and disfigures to

the precise extent that it restores. Autobiography veils a defacement of the mind of which it is itself the cause”.

To write an autobiography, for a woman, is to face the limitations of language. The female autobiographer is, therefore, compelled “to strive for modes of expression and self-representation in a patriarchal world not generous enough to make room for her.” (Bella Brodzki) Being a woman and speaking (about her life) is already a spectacular defiance, a new accommodation into the phallogentric system and within this system women’s autobiographies serve as sites of transgression both by recording personal experiences that were relegated, meant to be overlooked, and by articulating them for readers.

Supriya Chaudhury has rightly argued that “while women’s autobiographies have been of quite extraordinary importance to feminist scholarship in India,” they have been “in many ways the single most important resource in constituting an archive of women’s experience that might feed activism and theory”. (Chaudhuri 2020)

The autobiographies of Rassundari Devi (1809-1899) and Himabati Sen (1866 – 1933) are illustrative of many transgressions –cultural and strategic. Rassundari Devi’s autobiography is structured around her desire of literacy when reading was forbidden for women. Himabati Sen’s memoir maps the narrative of her extraordinary journey from a child-widow at the age of 10 to her becoming a doctor. The autobiographies offer an incisive examination of the condition of women in the given historical periods, the development of identities and subjectivities formed in a crucible of pain and suffering that offer new insights into our primary evidences.

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Bio-note: Zinia Mitra is a Professor at the Department of English and Director of Centre for Women's Studies, University of North Bengal. Her areas of research interest are Poetry, Feminism, and Genders Studies. Her books include *Indian Poetry in English: Critical Essays*, *Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra: Imagery and Experiential Identity*, *Twentieth Century British Literature: Reconstructing Literary Sensibility* (co-edited), *Interact* (co-edited), *The Concept of Motherhood in India: Myths, Theories and Realities*, *Fourth Wave Feminism*, *Social Media and (Sl)Activism*. She writes poetry . Her poems have been published in National and International journals including *Contemporary Literary Review*, *Kavya Bharati*, *East Lit. Indian Literature* (Sahitya Akademi) , *Asian Signature*, *Teesta Review*, *Setu*, *Poetry Potion* where her poem has been included in the best of 2020 collection. She was a part of a project on duoethnography under the Australian Association of Writing Program. She takes interest in translation. Her translations have been published in books and journals including *Indian Literature*, *Sahitya Akademi*. Her translation of "Jatiner Juto" by Sukumar Ray as 'Jatin and his Sandals' is included in ICSE textbook, *A Magic Place*. Her poetry volume *Some Words Never Sleep* has been published by Indie Blu(e) in 2021. She is on the editorial board of academic journals and of *Teesta Review* the International Journal of Poetry.

Masculinity Studies and Feminism

Dr. Kavya Krishna K.R, Assistant Professor, Dept of Humanistic Studies, IIT (BHU), Varanasi

Abstract:

The talk will introduce to the audience the field of Masculinity Studies. Masculinity Studies attempts to demonstrate 'masculinities as historically constructed, mutable and contingent' and the varied effect and relationship it has with different identities on the larger gender spectrum.

The talk will elucidate how masculinity studies taking its lead from feminism can engage in a critical interrogation on 'men, patriarchy and formations of masculinity' from the perspective of gendered power.

Bio-note: Dr. Kavya Krishna K R is an Assistant professor at the Dept. of Humanistic Studies, IIT (BHU), Varanasi. She received her PhD from Dept of Cultural Studies, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad on the topic Dance and Gender Performativity: Mohiniyattam and the Making of Malayalee Femininity. Her research areas are Gender Studies, Cultural Studies and Regional Indian Literatures. She has received grants and presented her research papers in reputed universities in Indian and abroad including University of Cambridge and University of Chester UK, University of Munster, Germany, University of Vienna etc. She has several publications to her credit with reputed publishers such as Springer, Cambridge Scholars and Bloomsbury.