Bharathidasan University
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Programme: M.A Gender Studies

Course Title: Gender Representation in Media: Feminist Critique
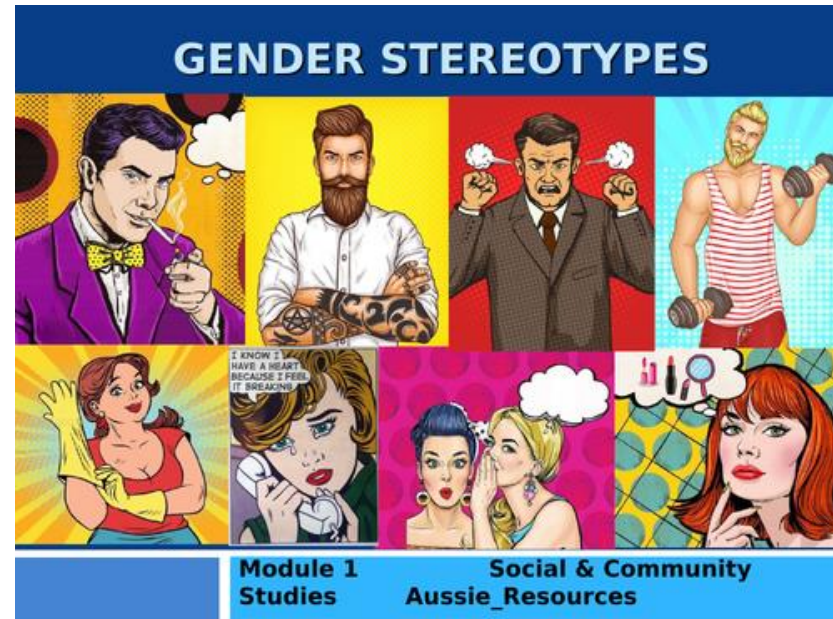## Code: CC-VII

Unit- IV-Representation and Reinforcing Population Culture

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Introduction to Gender Representation in Media

Media, both print and electronic, play a significant role in shaping societal views on gender.

Historically, women have been portrayed in a limited and stereotypical manner in both media and entertainment, often reinforcing traditional gender roles. This slide introduces the concept of gender representation and the importance of a gender-neutral perspective.

Feminist Writings and Media Representation

▶ Feminist theory critiques how women are depicted in media and highlights the need for diverse and authentic portrayals.

▶ Feminist writings argue for the inclusion of women's voices, experiences, and realities, challenging stereotypical portrayals and pushing for media that represents a more complex and real image of women.

Obscenity, Pornography, and Indecent Representation of Women

- Laws like the "Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act" aim to combat the exploitation of women in media.

- Media often objectifies women, reducing them to sexual objects or roles that emphasize passivity. The "Indecent Representation of Women" law is designed to restrict the portrayal of women in an offensive, obscene manner.

Representation of Women in Indian Soap Operas

- Soap operas, particularly in India, have often portrayed women in traditional, submissive roles.

- Indian soap operas have historically shown women in limited roles: as mothers, wives, or daughters who are defined by their relationships with men. These roles often reinforce stereotypes and restrict the portrayal of diverse female experiences.

Women's Sexuality in Films

- Women's sexuality in films is often depicted in a narrow and objectified manner.

- In many films, women's sexualities are represented through a male gaze, reducing women to sexual objects for entertainment. However, recent cinema has started exploring female desires and sexuality with more depth and respect.

Themes and Characters in Indian Soap Operas

- Indian soaps often focus on family dynamics, relationships, and the portrayal of ideal women.

- These soaps present women as the emotional backbone of families, often dealing with issues like betrayal, sacrifice, and moral dilemmas. While this can promote empathy, it also sometimes reinforces restrictive gender norms.

Soap Operas and Social Change

▶ Despite their conservative tendencies, soap operas can also drive social change.

▶ Some soap operas feature progressive female characters who challenge societal norms, address issues like domestic violence, education, and career aspirations, offering a platform for change in public consciousness

Case Study: Analysis of an Episode in an Indian Soap Opera

▶ Analyze a specific episode and identify gender-neutral portrayal.

▶ Choose a popular Indian soap opera episode where the female lead or supporting characters are portrayed in non-traditional roles. For instance, the character may take a strong stand for her career or challenge patriarchal norms, highlighting the evolution of female representation in media.

Episode Analysis:

- In a popular Indian soap, the female protagonist fights for her right to education or takes a stand against an abusive relationship.

- This episode challenges traditional gender roles and empowers women, showcasing resilience and independence.

Gender-Neutral Representation:

- The male characters are not shown as superior, and the women have equal say in the narrative. Both genders face challenges, and there is an effort to show men and women as equals, moving away from stereotypical portrayals.

Thank You