

November 20, 2024

Press Release

'Laapataa Ladies': SNCWS-Jamia Millia Islamia Hosts Gender Critical Analysis of India's Oscar Contender

The Sarojini Naidu Centre for Women's Studies (SNCWS) at Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) organized an online film discussion analyzing noted film maker Kiran Rao's directed & critically acclaimed Indian film and India's Oscar entry 'Laapataa Ladies' through a gender-critical lens. The event brought together scholars and students to examine the film's portrayal of women's agency and identity in contemporary India.

Poet, Author and Translator, Dr. Saba Bashir from the Department of English, JMI was the resource person while Prof. Bulbul Dhar James, Honorary Director of SNCWS and Head of the department of Political Science chaired the session. Dr. Adfer Shah from SNCWS coordinated the event, which was supported by student volunteers Shubhangi, Zoyba, and Vaibhav.

Set in rural India of 2001, the film ingeniously uses the premise of two brides accidentally swapping places during a train journey to unravel deeper narratives about women's identity, autonomy, and resistance within patriarchal structures. What appears on the surface as a comedic tale of mistaken identities transforms into a nuanced exploration of how women navigate, resist, and sometimes subvert societal constraints.

The discussion focused on the film's treatment of gender dynamics and social stereotypes in the Indian socio-cultural context. Dr Saba Bashir lucidly dealt with all the aspects of the film from gender to social structure to language aspects. On the Oscar entry of the film she argued, *“What is particularly striking about 'Laapataa Ladies' is how it transforms specific cultural contexts into universal themes of identity, freedom, and self-discovery. This isn't about airing dirty laundry; it's about contributing to world cinema with stories that are authentically Indian yet universally human”*. The speaker added that, *“The true celebration here is of our cinema's evolution - its ability to be critically aware while being artistically compelling, to be locally rooted while being globally relevant”*.

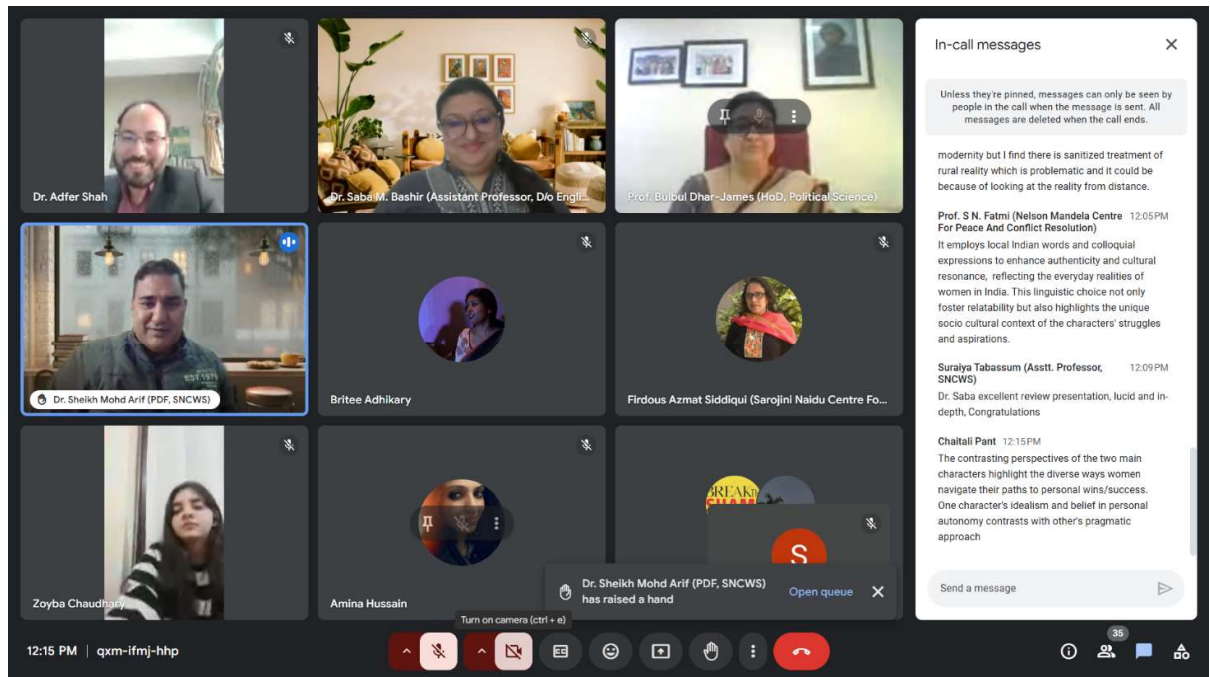
Prof. Bulbul Dhar James in her opening remarks argued about the relevance of such cinematic works and argued that *“The international recognition of such*

narratives reflects not our shame but our courage as a society to confront our challenges through art. It's a testament to our ability to engage in self-reflection while maintaining our cultural dignity. When we tell our stories with honesty and artistic integrity, we're not seeking validation but participating in a global dialogue about human experiences”.

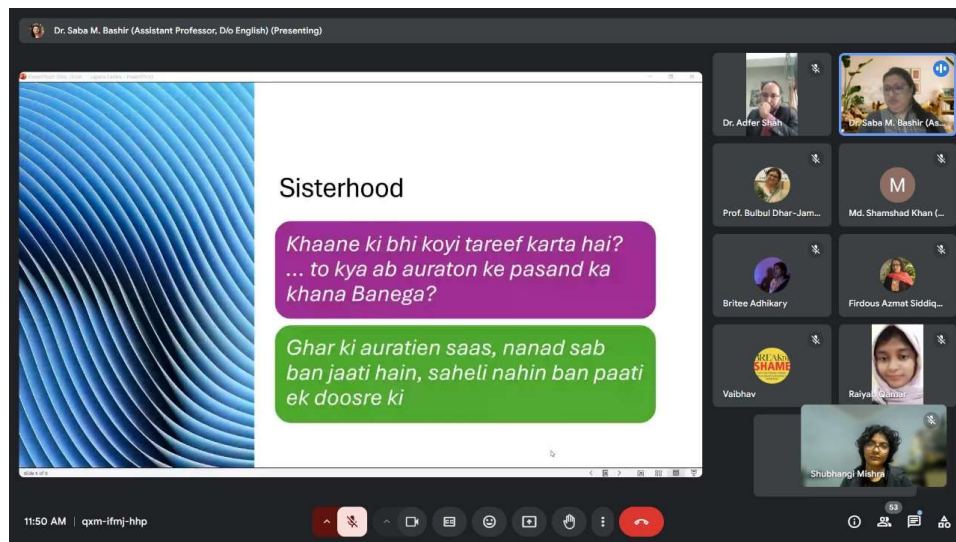
The film discussion examined 'Laapataa Ladies' as a mirror to Indian society, where the seemingly simple story of mistaken identities opens deeper conversations about women's voices, choices, and visibility in contemporary India. The film's artistic treatment of serious social issues sparked meaningful dialogue between academics and audiences. The event was a testament to the role of media in driving conversations on critical societal issues and the importance of academic spaces in analyzing these narratives through a gender lens. The online format enabled wider participation, fostering an inclusive dialogue between the expert and the participants about the intersection of gender, media, and cultural narratives. The discussion generated by the participants critically analyzed the film's portrayal of gender issues, especially in the Indian socio-cultural context. The film, which delves into gender dynamics and social stereotypes, served as an engaging medium for exploring broader themes of patriarchy, identity and women's agency. The session reflected the university's commitment to fostering conversations around gender equity and representation in media and culture. The engaging format, expert insights, and the interdisciplinary focus made it a valuable learning opportunity for students, academics, and the wider audience.

Dr Adfer Shah, PR SNCWS and the coordinator of the film discussion introduced the theme and argued that, "Laapataa Ladies skilfully subverts conventional narratives, showcasing women's agency through nuanced humor, intersecting gender with class and regional identities, and highlighting rural women's resistance strategies, ultimately offering a powerful critique of societal norms." The formal vote of thanks was delivered by Dr Adfer Shah and the Student Coordinator Zoyba.

Public Relations Office
Jamia Millia Islamia



Reviews and Comments from the Participants



Presentation prepared by Dr. Saba for the discussion

Dialogues, through two threads running through:



Prof. Bulbul

Dr. Saba is presenting



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Dr. Saba is presenting



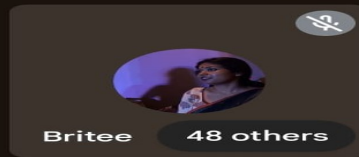
Dr. Saba



Prof. Bulbul



You



Britee 48 others



JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA
Sarojini Naidu Centre for Women's Studies

Discussion

on



DATE - 20TH NOVEMBER 2024

TIMING - 11:15 AM

VENUE - MULTIPURPOSE HALL, SNCWS



Speaker

Dr. Saba Bashir
Department of English
Jamia Millia Islamia



Chair

Prof. Bulbul Dhar James
HOD, Dept of Political Science, JMI
and
Hony. Director, SNCWS



Coordinator

Dr. Adfer Shah, SNCWS

Student volunteers - Shubhangi, Zoyba, Vaibhav
