



TRANSITION OF THE IDEA OF MASCULINITY IN K-POP CULTURE WITHIN INDIAN VIEWERS

Teresa Devi Arambam

MA English, Jyoti Nivas College Autonomous

Abstract

K-Pop or Korean Pop is a form of music in Korea which consists of different kinds of genre. In South Korea the themes of music were mainly nationalistic before the birth of the K-Pop era we know now. The K-Pop culture began to gain popularity mainly because of the perfect synchronized dancing, addictive melodies and attractive South Korean performers. The growth of digitisation has given an exposure of the K-Pop culture towards the Indian viewers and also internationally. This is evident with the Korean songs entering Billboard and the boy band 'BTS' haven been nominated several times for the American Music Awards. The paper will look upon the knowledge of how K-Pop industry has given a new set of male and its idea of masculinity. The paper investigates how the 'New Male' has influenced the perspective of Indian masculinity through digitisation.

Keywords: KPop, Masculinity, subculture

INTRODUCTION

The idea of masculinity has always been constructed socially, cultural and historically. Binaries are often created when men are expected to be rational, strong and to be the breadwinner of the family whereas women are expected to be emotional, dependent and inferior. When we come to the idea of gender we often find patriarchal mainstream society reinforcing the image of the 'Macho Man' in media, movies. The expectancy behaviour can often lead to psychological problems in men. According to Jonah Gokova, men have been forced by the patriarchy to be collaborators in systems that oppress women. They have allowed themselves to move away from the emotional connection from their family. So, there comes a need to redefine masculinity as it has become toxic to the society as well as to him.

K-Pop or Korean Pop is a form of music in Korea which consists of different kinds of genre. In South Korea the themes of music were mainly nationalistic before the birth of the K-Pop era we know now. Seo-Taeji and the boys is seen as the pioneers of the K-Pop culture. The K-Pop idol culture has been growing ever since. As we tried to trace the transition we find that South Korea like any patriarchal mainstream society have the idea of female with concepts of cute and dependent girl whereas the guys had sophisticated and bad boy band. With the coming up of companies like SM Entertainment, YG, and JYP, we find that there is a 'Hallyu' affect which is also known as a Korean wave. The K-Pop culture began to gain popularity mainly

because of the perfect synchronized dancing, addictive melodies and attractive South Korean performers. The growth of digitisation has given an exposure of the K-Pop culture towards the Indian viewers and also internationally. This is evident with the Korean songs entering Billboard and the boy band 'BTS' having been nominated several times for the American Music Awards. The paper will look upon the knowledge of how K-Pop industry has given a new set of male and its idea of masculinity. The paper investigates how the 'New Male' has influenced the perspective of Indian masculinity through digitisation.

ANALYSIS

The new trend

As the K-Pop industry began to take its stand globally we find that there is an emergence of a new set of male. The 'New Male' that is seen in the Korean culture are the ones who use beauty products and make cute expressions in order to connect more with the fans. By using 'BTS' as an icon of the new trend we find that they are males who take their stand as a male but is in connect with their feminine side. They are often known as soft masculinity. The main emphasis given to the characteristics of the 'New male' is the use of bright makeup, eyeliner and blushes in their music videos and interviews. In the recent trend of Korea there is an image of 'Flower boy' in South Korea where the male focuses on beauty, shows cute expressions and are not afraid to show their emotional side. This new type of men can be seen as an outcome of the concept of 'Flowering knight' which was known as 'Hwarang'. They are young noble men who studied culture, use makeup as accessories and were warriors. The concept of 'New Male' in the paper is to distinguish between the types of masculinity seen in K-Pop and other spaces.

The idols in K-Pop not only use makeup for the professional life but also seen in live broadcast where they use beauty products to keep their skin clear and hygienic. As we trace the new male, we find that it is quite contrasting with the idea of masculinity that is there in the mainstream society. The mainstream often uses homophobic comments towards the K-Pop culture. In a conservative society we find that a male who connects with the feminine side is often seen as inferior and therefore there is a need to redefine masculinity. The idea of masculinity brought in by the K-pop culture not only focuses on the use of beauty products. There is more connection towards the fans by showing cute expressions. The K-Pop idols aren't also hesitant on showing their emotions towards the crowd. We see that it breaks the notion of 'Men don't cry'. The emergence of the new male which contrasts with the idea of the mainstream can be seen as a challenge in order to bring gender equality. We can see how it not only breaks down the binary of the male and female but can be seen at a larger aspect of bringing equality including the LGBTQ community. It is also possible to see the coming up of trends as an effect of globalisation and capitalism. However, the influence on masculinity cannot be ignored.

The Effect on Indian Masculinity

The idea of masculinity has undergone a tremendous change in India. During the pre-colonial period we find that the Brahmins, the intellectuals were considered as a masculine figure. With the coming of the colonisers there was a change where the ones in the force, strong physical appearance, and muscular bodies were considered as a masculine figure. In an essay by Mangesh Kulkarni 'Indian masculinities: A million mutations now?' we find that there has been coming up of a new set of males known as the Metro sexual in India. According to the Merriam Webster the metrosexuals are usually urban male given to enhancing his personal appearance by grooming, beauty treatments and fashionable clothes. The idea of 'New Male' is very similar to the idea of the metrosexuals. In India, there have been androgynies who have always challenged the mainstream on bringing a gender fluid society. The influence of the K-Pop has led to more acceptance of a gender fluid beings from the Indian viewers. We have seen androgyny males in fashion society. Ranveer Singh is often used as a classic example of an androgyny. There is gender ambiguity in fashion, gender Identity or lifestyle. Even though there was the presence of androgyny it was less known to the public. They were often stereotyped and generalised as homosexuals who becomes problematic. Their identity is often erased by seeing it as something which they are not.

Digitisation has brought in the access of K-pop industry in India. With the help of digitisation, we see that there is a transition in the ideology of the Indian viewers about masculinity. The 'New Male' creates an impact towards the society by giving us the evidence of the growing K-pop fan in India. Several K-Pop contests are held in India. It started from the North-eastern part of India from places like Manipur, Mizoram. In 2018, the main contest was held in Delhi. Boy bands like BTS, EXO, and IKON have a huge impact towards the viewers. The impact which was started by the Androgynies has been successfully achieved by the K-pop culture. Therefore, from this evidence we can see how digitisation helps in the transition of the idea of masculinity in India. There have been make-up tutorial videos on how to achieve the makeup image of the Korean males. Today, we see there is idealization of the K-Pop idols and they become an epitome of what the female wants their partner to be. It is possible to say that the idea of masculinity that is brought in by the K-pop industry has impacted the idea of the Indian viewers. There is no denial of the identity of the New Males. It challenges and subverts the idea of how culturally 'Boys don't wear pink' is justified by the mainstream. The New male challenges by using bright colour clothes and also beauty products. The mimicking of the idol's hairstyle, clothing is a proof of how some have challenged the constrictions given to male. The beauty products are also often used by males and this breaks the gendered notion of certain products. The 'New Male' can be seen as breaking the binary of femininity and masculinity that has been constructed by the society. The acceptance of the new male and change in the perspective shows how there is fluidity in gender but it is often constricted by the society. K-pop becomes a common phenomenon in India and is often widely celebrated. Rather than seeing it as something unusual, there is adoration towards the idols. Since the adoration is evident as the fans are growing rapidly in India, it is possible to see that there will be a complete change in the perception of the Indian viewers to a larger aspect.

CONCLUSION

With the change of time we see that even men had started focusing on their appearance to be at par with their female counterparts. The perspective of the viewers has changed where we see more of an egalitarian view towards male and female. We do find that there are also many who still look down on men just because they connect more with their feminine side. It is also possible to say that digitisation becomes a platform where there is space for showcasing one's identity and depends on the viewer to accept it or not. Therefore, we can see the transition that has been brought in by the K-pop industry towards the Indian crowd. As the development in the perspective is evident, it is quite possible to say that among Indian viewers' things will be more appreciated and accepted. Therefore, makeup becomes a product which cannot be gendered. Today we look upon a world that is ready to accept views different from theirs and amalgamate with the new identities people wish to carry. We also cannot ignore the fact that there is hesitation to accept this idea culturally but we do hope in the future there will be a change for a better world.

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