



Lesson: Popular Culture

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5.1: Popular Culture

Culture has been seen as being embedded within the structures of dominance that characterize society and the network of practices and relations within which particular individuals are positioned and identified. Throughout the long transition into agrarian capitalism and then in the formation and development of industrial capitalism, there is a more or less continuous struggle over the culture of working people, the labouring classes and the poor. Capital had a stake in the culture of the popular classes because the constitution of a whole new social order around capital required a more or less continuous, if intermittent, process of re-education, in the broadest sense. And one of the principle sites of resistance to the forms through which this 'reformation' of the people was pursued lay in popular tradition. That is why popular culture is linked for so long to questions of tradition, of traditional forms of life and why its 'traditionalism' has been so often misinterpreted as a product of a merely conservative impulse, backward looking and anachronistic, struggle and resistance— but also, ofcourse, appropriation and ex-propriation. Transformation, meaning the active work on existing traditions and activities, their active reworking, lay at the heart of the study of popular culture. Though formally these were the cultures of the people 'outside the walls', beyond political society and the triangle of power, they were never, infact, outside of the larger field of social forces and cultural relations. They not only constantly pressed on 'society'; they were linked and connected with it, by a multitude of traditions and practices.

5.1.1: Meaning

Popular Culture, according to Peter Burke, is best defined in a negative way as unofficial culture, the culture of the non-elite, the 'subordinate' classes. Quite clearly then, 'Popular Culture' may carry strongly derogative connotations as the opposite or debasement of 'high' culture and 'art' proper, or may be celebrated as carnivalesque counter-culture. As Patricia Uberoi says, it may imply the everyday, unremarkable, and the ordinary, or it may refer to dramatic eruptions against the established normative order. It may indicate the culture of 'the people' in the sense of folk culture; or it may refer exclusively to products of the modern mass media in industrialized, capitalist societies, emphasizing their wide popularity, circulation, and saturation, or it may refer to something in-between-a non-elite subculture which may eventually transform into a mass phenomenon. In its sense as mass culture, popular culture is often identified as an instrument for the imposition of hegemonic ideas, as a site of popular resistance against society's dominant and official ideologies. To discover the attitudes and values of ordinary people (craftsmen and peasants for Burke), it is necessary to modify the traditional approaches to cultural history and borrow concepts and methods from other disciplines. The natural discipline from which to borrow is that of folklore, since folklorists are centrally concerned with the 'folk', with oral traditions, and with ritual. The idea of 'popular culture' or *Volkskultur* originated in the same place and time as 'cultural history': in Germany in the late eighteenth century. Folk songs, folktales, dances, rituals, arts and crafts were discovered by middle class intellectuals at this time. However, the history of this popular culture was left to antiquarians, folklorists and anthropologists. It was only in the 1960s that historians turned to the study of popular culture.

Though popular culture derived its significance only in the later part of the nineteenth century, there has been a long standing tradition of interest in this subject. It was in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when traditional popular culture was first beginning to disappear, that the 'people' or the 'folk' became a subject of interest to European intellectuals. Folk songs, folk music and other forms of popular literature like folktales and folk play became fashionable. This interest, according to Burke, was part of a wider movement, which was called as 'the discovery of the people'.

However, it is high time we look beyond the phenomenon of 'print capitalism', narrowly conceived, to consider other products of the modern culture industries- especially forms of visual culture. Even though popular culture in India negotiates itself in perhaps all spheres of everyday life, the study of it has received attention only recently. To take an example of how popular culture manifests itself: the recent emergence of 'Bollywood' and the values they stand for stands testimony to India's transformation in the globalizing 1990s. A clear orientation was towards diasporic viewers whose values and preferences were shared by the new Indian middle class with an emphasis on love, family and Indian culture. Quite related to this phenomenon is another trend in which Bollywood style and personalities are also

inspiring much of popular culture in India— fashion, design, 'Page 3' public and private celebrations such as weddings, religious festivals and political rallies. Quite clearly this kind of cinema was entirely different from the pioneering days of Dadasaheb Phalke or Guru Dutt. As Ashis Nandy explains, these popular films today are produced, conceived and executed within the middle class culture, more specifically within the confines of the lower middle- class sensitivities and hence meant for mass consumption.

5.1.2: Popular Culture as 'Folk' culture and 'Mass' culture

So far we have been focusing on the popular culture as the culture of the 'folk' meaning ordinary people. In fact, in the later chapter we would be looking at popular culture and tradition in relation with the folk. However, it is important to differentiate between the two. According to Stuart Blackburn, popular culture sometimes uses oral transmission, but depends more heavily on mass media. Folklore on the other hand has a face-to-face audience; the traditions, materials and renditions are usually of long-standing; professional genres like epic and myth as well as non professional genres of proverbs, riddle and folktale. Popular culture in other words, can be differentiated from folklore in that it is also commercially produced, in a standardized form, for mass consumption.

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| At the present time in India, classical, folk and popular forms may coexist in a single genre. In painting, for instance, the Mughal miniatures are 'classical', the madhubani paintings are 'folk', and calendar or poster art is 'popular'. In dance, while bharatnatyam or kathak are classical modes, we also have folk dances and the 'popular' dances in movies. |
| Source: Blackburn, S. & Ramanujan, A.K., Another Harmony: New Essays on the Folklore of India, OUP,1996. |

This means eventually two definitions of popular culture are evident. The first is popular culture as a quasi- mythical rural folk culture and the other is popular culture as the degraded 'mass culture' of the new urban industrial working class. As explained above, popular culture as 'folk' culture laid special emphasis on the culture of the 'folk', their belief systems, myths, songs etc, but such a study also helped to establish the tradition of seeing ordinary people as masses, consuming 'mass' culture. Like the discovery of folk culture, the invention of popular culture as mass culture was in part a response to middle class fears engendered by industrialization, urbanisation and the development of an urban industrial working class. The new

industrial towns and cities of the nineteenth century very quickly evolved clear lines of class segregation in which residential separation was compounded by the new work relations of industrial capitalism. Such developments, it was argued, could only mean a weakening of social authority and the commercial dismantling of cultural cohesion. It was in this context, and its continuing aftermath that the study of the culture of 'the masses' first emerged. Today the 'mass' culture refers to products of the modern mass media emphasizing their wide popularity, circulation and saturation.

5.1.3: The politics of the 'Popular'

Robert Redfield, a social anthropologist in 1930s put forward a model for societies. Societies, he suggested had two cultural traditions, the 'great tradition' of the educated few, and the 'little tradition' of the rest. He said "The great tradition is cultivated in schools or temples; the little tradition works itself out and keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities... The two traditions are interdependent. Great tradition and little tradition have long affected each other and continue to do so... Great epics have arisen out of elements of traditional tale-telling by many people, and epics have returned again to the peasantry for modification and incorporation in local cultures.

Source: Burke, Peter. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Wildwood House, 1978

Redfield offers what might be called a 'residual' definition of popular culture, as the culture or tradition of the non learned, the unlettered, the non elite. In modern Europe this binary is easily recognisable. There is on one hand the classical tradition, the medieval scholastic philosophy and theology and the intellectual movements like the Renaissance, Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. On the other hand was the residue. Folksongs and folktales, festivals, in short the popular culture. Similarly in India, on the one hand there is the Brahmanical Vedic culture of the earlier period followed by Islamic culture of the medieval times. The tribal, local and regional fall under the residual category of lesser traditions. However such definitions are narrow because they omit upper class participation in popular culture which is obvious in the case of Europe. Carnival, for example, was for everyone. Similarly, Brahmins borrowed a number of rituals from the tribal lore and participated in them. Also when popular culture as the cultures of the 'people' is defined, it does not consider the fact that the people is not a culturally homogeneous unit but it is culturally stratified in a

complex way. What we call 'popular culture' was often the culture of the most visible of the people or perhaps the culture that was deliberately made visible to serve an end. The activities and performances of the 'people' were documented or came to light only when the literate upper classes took an interest in them.

Using reified notions of chaste womanhood to mediate relations between men is seen as an essentially colonial phenomenon. Yet the study of gender relations in the eighteenth century suggests otherwise. Control and ritual subordination of women in fact became a very important means of expressing status and social difference. Social ascendancy was sought by insisting that Brahman women conform much more closely to the model of *pativrata*, of absolute chastity and wifely devotion, set out in Hindu textual law. These changes, as Rosalind Hanlon says, extended beyond the realm of law into that of popular culture and oral tradition.

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| In Maharashtra, the <i>lavani</i> form of love song, and the <i>tamasha</i> folk play had during the seventeenth century become important forms of popular and village entertainment originating probably in the troupes employed to amuse Mughal armed forces. From the eighteenth century, however, these began to be patronised as a more cultivated and stylised form of court entertainment by the peshwas themselves. What is striking in the recorded <i>lavani</i> songs of the eighteenth century is the extent to which their harsh elements of raw and bawdy humour have been replaced by refined praise of chaste wives who pined for their absent soldier husbands, and terrible imprecations against prostitutes and headstrong women who disregarded their obligations to their families. Lavani is a romantic song sung by a lady who waits for her lover to accept her, who longs for his love. |
| Source: Hanlon, R., Histories in Transition: Approaches to the study of colonialism and culture in India, History Workshop, 32 (1991:Autumn) |

The question that comes to mind is that why did the discovery of popular culture come when it did? According to Peter Burke, there were a number of reasons for this interest in the people at this particular time in Europe: aesthetic, intellectual and political. The main aesthetic reason of course was what came to be known as 'revolt against art'. The discovery of the popular culture was part of a movement which was against Enlightenment; against its elitism, its rejection of tradition and against its stress on reason. " 'Artificial' became a pejorative term and 'artless' a term of praise".

Did you know?

Rousseau was a great spokesman for cultural primitivism in his generation and he had a great taste for folksongs, which he found touching because they were simple, naïve and archaic.

Source: Original

Even before the industrial revolution, the growth of towns, improvement of roads, and the spread of literacy were undermining traditional popular culture. However by the same process, the centre was invading the periphery and this process of social change was making people more aware of the importance of tradition.

The Enlightenment was also disliked in some quarters in Germany and Spain, for example, because it was foreign. "The fashion for popular culture in late eighteenth century Spain was a way of expressing opposition to France". The discovery of popular culture, then, was also closely associated with the rise of nationalism. To a considerable extent the discovery of popular culture was a series of 'nativistic' movements in the sense of organised attempts by societies which were under foreign domination to revive their traditional culture. Folksongs, it came to be realised eventually, could evoke a sense of solidarity in a dispersed population which lacked traditional national institutions. It became part of a movement of self definition and national liberation. In India, with the rise of nationalist thinking in the 1870s it was only step to conceive of a 'national literature', a literary definition of the past which would include folklore. Folklore and popular tradition was revived and rewritten by intellectuals as an act of restoration, to preserve a national identity in an era of foreign cultural domination. But 'folklore' first had to emerge from indecent tales and improbable legends into a more credible source for constructing cultural identity. Tapti Roy in "Disciplining the printed text" (in Partha Chatterjee ed. *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal*), for example, has observed that nationalism needed to include popular culture but only in an edited version, one that had been appropriated and sanitised.

5.1.4: Locating the History of Popular Culture

'Popular Culture' provides a useful benchmark for analysing the ongoing transformations in the discipline of history that have been so marked since the 1960s— changes conditioned both by major intellectual shifts and broader world developments. The late nineteenth century, early twentieth century were a time when academic stress was associated with writing histories where archival documentation was readily available. As a result of this, the histories that were written were dominated by histories of ruling groups and statecraft, organised politics etc. The 'social' and the 'cultural' were consequently marginalised or

relegated to folklore and anthropology, which were defined as being opposite to history or a study of 'peoples without history'.

A shift in this historiography came in the 1930s where the quest for a 'total' history necessitated both a broadening of sources and a new way of writing history. However, a decisive break can only be traced in the 1960s and 1970s. Social and cultural history suddenly emerged as a dominant historical concern, and the study of 'popular culture' came to be recognised as one of its central preoccupations. Popular culture moved from the periphery of the historian's interest towards the centre, beginning with works like that of Julio Caro Baroja on Spain, Robert Mandrou and Natalie Davies on France, Carlo Ginzburg on Italy, E.P. Thompson and Keith Thomas on England. Carlo Ginzburg's fascinating search for clues into popular mentalities through analysis of subtle variations between the texts referred to by Menocchio, and his own depositions before the Inquisition in *The Cheese and the Worms* contributed immensely to this kind of a study. The most influential of the studies made in the 1960s was Edward Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* (1963). In this book, Thompson did not confine himself to analysing the role in class formation played by economic and political changes, but examined the place of popular culture in this process. His book included vivid descriptions of the initiation rituals of artisans, the place of fairs in 'the cultural life of the poor', the symbolism of food and the iconography of riots, from banners or loaves of bread on sticks to the effigies of hate figures hanged on the streets. Thompson's influence on younger historians has been tremendous, as evident in the History Workshop movement, founded in the 1960s under the leadership of Raphael Samuel who eventually founded a journal, "History Workshop" and through his innumerable articles and seminar papers inspired many people to write history 'from below'.

'Social' came to mean everyday life, customs, dress, manners, religious rituals and belief, myth etc. "Popular culture" has been normally conceptualised in implicit opposition to "elite" or "official" cultures and bureaucratised states. In elite centred historiography, "popular culture" appeared as vulgarised fragments of the culture of superiors, or considered primitive, unchanging unless reformed by dominant groups. Hence, historical efforts at studying the popular cultures that developed in the 60s and 70s initially encouraged a fairly clear-cut elite-popular binary. As Sumit Sarkar puts it, the concept of the popular as a distinct level often had as its corollary a theory of subsequent 'reform' or 'conquest' through actions by modernising elites and bureaucratic states. Thus in 1978, Robert Muchembled in a study of elite and popular culture in fifteenth-eighteenth century France, developed an influential 'acculturation thesis' in which the initially distinct popular domain was supposed to have been completely conquered in the era of the Counter-Reformation and absolute monarchy.

However, recent French historiography has severely questioned these twin assumptions of total autonomy followed by subsequent total acculturation. According to Roger Chartier, elites frequently participated in the specific practices and texts characterised as popular— cheap literature, festivals like carnival etc— while

'popular' was far too much of a homogenising label, tending to blur differences of social class, gender, age or region. If a distinct 'level' could not be demarcated, there exist a multiplicity of 'appropriations' or varied 'readings'. Hence, elite reform, conquest or acculturation also could never be absolute. Once a distinction is made between learned culture and popular culture, the assumption is obviously an absence of cultural homogeneity. When we say 'people' who exactly are these people? Everyone or just the non elites? If the latter, we are employing a residual category and hence the assumption of the homogeneity of the excluded. Another problem for historians of popular culture is whether they should include or exclude elites. What makes this exclusion problematic is the fact that people with high status, great wealth or a substantial amount of power are not necessarily different in their culture from ordinary people. In the seventeenth century France, for instance, the readers of chap-books— cheap booklets traditionally described as examples of popular culture— included noble women and even a duchess. Hence, Roger Chartier has argued that it is virtually impossible to label either objects or cultural practices as 'popular'. Scholars have often pointed to the many interactions between learned and popular culture.

5.1.5: Recent Shifts

'Pure autonomy' or 'total encapsulation' are misconceptions in the study of popular culture. Tradition is a vital element in culture; but it has little to do with the mere persistence of old forms. It has more to do with the ways elements have been articulated. These arrangements in a national-popular culture have no fixed or inscribed position, and certainly no meaning which is carried along so to speak, in the stream of historical tradition, unchanged. This kind of an approach seeks to contradict those self-enclosed approaches to popular culture which, value 'tradition' for its own sake, and treat it in an ahistorical manner, analyse popular cultural forms as if they contained within themselves, from their moment of origin, some fixed and unchanging meaning or value.

It is important, however, at the outset that the history of folklore and nationalism in India differs from its counterpart in Europe where popular narrative forms became natural vehicles for nationalism. While folklore was given a literary legitimacy by the European movements, it failed to achieve that status in India. Right from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when they were first brought into the public sphere as reflections of Indian tradition, they were seen as pre-colonial and traditional. It was precisely because of the concern that they reflected reprehensible features of that tradition that they began to be condemned later. Ofcourse this contained parts of the lesser tradition that could not be acculturated with the great tradition. The discourse about popular culture and folklore was characterized by the same ambivalence found in the wider debate about tradition and modernity. The classical forms began to be considered as representing a higher level of civilization while folklore was tainted by suspicions of immorality and primitiveness. While

folklore continued to be invoked time and again, it never occupied a centrestage in scholarship or public life. It was perhaps too native to inspire a modern nation which explains the lack of interest in it.

Nevertheless, the recent impact of worldwide historiographical shifts has become fairly evident in Indian social-historical research. The Cambridge School's bold effort at 'total history' and the evolution of the Subaltern School are examples of this. The more recent attempts at recovering a mine of information from a study of popular culture are exemplary. Throughout this unit we shall be discussing the so called 'discovery of the folk' with A.K.Ramanujan as one of its pioneers. But parallel to this development has been an equal interest in what is today known as 'mass culture'. In this context, a recent work by Patricia Uberoi, *Freedom and Destiny* is noteworthy where she uses themes of family and gender in Indian popular culture to commend popular culture as an important resource for sociological insights into contemporary social issues and processes. She establishes the importance of understanding not only the ways in which popular culture is represented and visually presented, but also how it is produced and indeed how it is received. Drawing its material from three popular media--'calendar art' (popular chromolithography), commercial (Bollywood cinema), and magazine romance fiction--the essays bring a gender-sensitive perspective to bear on the representation of the family, of childhood, of courtship and conjugality, of arranged and love marriage, of femininity and masculinity, and of sexuality within and outside marriage, as well as on the wider dilemmas and dynamics of Indian modernity and nation-building. The three genres that Patricia actually deals with are not folk-art forms of the type associated with the localized 'Little Traditions' of Indian folk culture, whose dynamic relationship with the pan-Indian 'Great Tradition' has been the subject of much social anthropological theorizing and empirical investigation. On the contrary, these three genres are 'popular' by virtue of their wide distribution as products of the modern mass media. Commercially produced, calendar art, Bollywood movies and magazine romance are all regarded as 'low' art forms, aesthetically inferior, and structurally unelaborated compared to their opposites/parallels in 'high' culture.

It is in this context that Ashis Nandy's edited volume *The Secret Politics of Our Desires* is also worth mentioning. According to Ashis Nandy, "popular cinema represents the low-brow version of the values, ambitions and anxieties of Indians who are caught between two cultures, two lifestyles and two visions of a desirable society". He uses the metaphor 'urban slum' for Indian popular cinema. According to him, "both cinema and the slum in India showed the same impassioned negotiation with everyday survival, combined with the same intense effort to forget that negotiation, the same mix of the comic and the tragic, spiced with elements borrowed indiscriminately from the classical and the folk, the East and the West". The discarded, obsolete population that inhabits the unintended city is a constant embarrassment to the rest of their urbane brethren— in the way that the concerns and style of popular cinema are often an embarrassment to the devotees of art films and high culture. And yet they amass such popularity that "they are threatening to turn both the folk and the classical into second order presences, the way the

immensely successful television serials on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata now influence the frame for interpreting the epics for a large number of Indians. Popular Cinema and television serials indeed best express mass culture today. There certainly is a secret politics to Cricket and Delhi weddings as recurring themes in Bollywood films today and the seemingly undying popularity of the Saas-Bahu daily soaps on the television.

Quite interestingly, recently there have been works on several other popular items of mass culture besides cinema. *The Tao of Cricket*, another of Ashis Nandy's work talks of Cricket and the place it has come to hold in the lives of every Indian. Like the actor of popular films, the cricketer has come to bridge the life experiences of the cricketer and the spectator through a mythic structure reflecting their common concern with fate. "In the popular culture of entertainment, cricket-as-spectacle is closer to film-as-spectacle than cricket-as-sport". The unit shall in subsequent chapters aim to reveal the 'folk' element of popular culture and show how cultures overlap with each other and transform themselves in the process such that no tradition can claim for itself an autonomous space that is unchanging and untouched. The aim shall be to look at how oral and written folk traditions interact with the 'great' tradition.



Summary

- Popular culture provided the site for resistance against the re-education and reformation of the working class and the labouring poor.
- Though always seen as belonging to people 'beyond the walls', they were intricately woven with the society as a whole.
- Popular culture a subject of interest among European intellectuals since the eighteenth century when popular literature became immensely fashionable.
- Defining the 'popular' as a residual category omits the possibility of looking for upper class participation in such cultures.
- The term 'popular' is quite narrow as it is not a homogeneous category we are talking of. There are varieties of traditions and only the most visible of these becomes the 'popular culture' of the people. Hence popular culture has a politics of its own.
- A number of reasons: aesthetic, intellectual and political were responsible for the growing interest in popular culture in the late eighteenth century.
- However popular culture caught the historian's imagination only in the 1960s when writing of a social and cultural history became important.
- It is impossible to work with the elite-popular binary and we should look for the interactions that these cultures have amongst themselves. Instead of treating the 'popular' as a homogeneous category, the varieties of popular culture needs to be emphasized.
- An important distinction needs to be drawn between the popular and the folk.
- Popular culture and folklore have not inspired the same interest in India as in Europe which explains why not much attention has been given on them. However, the recent changed in historiography seeks to uncover important breakthroughs through an empirical study of popular culture and communities.

Exercises

Essay questions

- 1.1 What do you understand by the term 'popular culture'?
- 1.2 How does popular culture affect the elite culture?
- 1.3 Why did 'popular culture' emerge as an important area of investigation in the eighteenth century?
- 1.4 What are the major historiographical shifts in the writing of popular culture with reference to Europe?
- 1.5 Account for the failure of folklore in inspiring nationalism in India.

Objective questions

| Question Number | Type of question | LOD |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----|
| 1 | Match the following | |

Question

Match the following:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| a) Carlo Ginzburg | i) <i>Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe</i> |
| b) E.P.Thompson | ii) <i>Cheese and the Worms</i> |
| c) Roger Chartier | iii) <i>Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France</i> |
| d) Peter Burke | iv) <i>Making of the English Working Class</i> |

Correct Answer / Option(s)

- a) and ii)
- b) and iv)
- c) and iii)
- d) and i)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

Cheese and the Worms is a book written by Carlo Ginzburg in 1976. Hence a) matches (ii). Similarly *Making of the English Working Class* was written by E.P. Thompson in 1963. Therefore b) matches (iv). Roger Chartier wrote *Cultural uses of print in Early Modern France* in 1987. Hence c) matches (iii). And *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* was written by Peter Burke in 1978. So, d) matches (i).

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Other combinations are false due to reasons mentioned above.

Reviewer's Comment:

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| Question Number | Type of question | LOD |
|-----------------|------------------|-----|
| 2 | True or False | |

Question

True or False?

- It is easy to define popular culture as the culture of the subordinate classes.
- Popular culture came to be recognized only as late as in the 1960s.
- Elites had a culture of their own and never participated in the popular culture.
- Popular culture assumed importance in the various nativistic movements across Europe.

Correct Answer / Option(s)

- It is easy to define popular culture as the culture of the subordinate classes. :False
- Popular culture came to be recognized only as late as in the 1960s.: False
- Elites had a culture of their own and never participated in the popular culture.: False
- Popular culture assumed importance in the various nativistic movements across Europe.: True

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

Popular culture is a complex term which has been falsely defined simply as the culture of the subordinate classes. However, it leaves out the overlaps it constantly has with the greater tradition and the variations it has in itself. Though popular culture became a subject of historical enquiry only in the 1960s there has been a long standing tradition of interest in the subject since the eighteenth century. Elites did follow a culture of their own but they also participated in the popular culture. An example of this is the Carnival in which everyone participated.

Popular Culture contributed immensely to the national movements of countries in Europe. It was part of a movement of self definition and liberation.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

The term 'subordinate class' assumes a kind of homogeneity of 'popular culture' and overlooks the participation of the elites in this culture.

Popular culture came to be recognized since the late eighteenth century itself.

A non- participation of elites in the popular culture assumes a kind of cultural binary which is a misconception.

Reviewer's Comment:

| Question Number | Type of question | LOD |
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| 3 | Multiple choice | |

Question

Choose the correct answer:

- The idea of popular culture originated in (a)England (b) France (c) Germany (d) Russia
- Lavani is a folk song and dance form of (a) Maharashtra (b) Bihar (c) Rajasthan (d) Punjab.
- Which of these best explains the processes that popular culture undergoes: (a) Pure autonomy (b) total encapsulation (c)transformation (d)none of these.

Correct Answer / Option(s)

- The idea of popular culture originated in (a)England (b) France (c) Germany (d) Russia.

Answer: (c)

- Lavani is a folk song and dance form of (a) Maharashtra (b) Bihar (c) Rajasthan (d) Punjab.

Answer: (a)

- Which of these best explains the processes that popular culture undergoes: (a) Pure autonomy (b) total encapsulation (c)transformation (d)none of these

Answer: (c)

Justification/ Feedback for the correct answer

The idea of popular culture originated in Germany in the late eighteenth century when folk tales, folk songs, rituals, art and crafts were discovered by the middle class intellectuals.

Lavani is a folk song and dance form of Maharashtra usually performed by a female and expresses the agony of a woman who pines for her husband/lover.

Transformation lies at the heart of popular culture in the sense that it is constantly worked and reworked upon such that only those aspects of the culture are prominent which ought to be seen.

Resource/Hints/Feedback for the wrong answer

Pure autonomy and total encapsulation are misconceptions in the study of popular culture as neither does popular culture exist in isolation, there are constant overlaps with the great tradition; nor is there a total encapsulation whereby the greater tradition completely subordinates or absorbs the popular culture. Hence transformation and the process of this transformation is what explains popular culture.

Reviewer's Comment:

Glossary

Pejorative: disapproving or suggesting that something is not good or is of no importance.

Carnival: a special occasion or period of public enjoyment and entertainment involving the wearing of unusual clothes, dancing, eating and drinking usually held in the roads of the city.

Chap books: Cheap, small publications of a popular nature dealing with daily matters, folktales, ballads etc.

Further readings

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