

IMPACT OF CULTURE INDUSTRY ON INDIAN HIGH ART

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Abstract

The development of capitalism has laid major changes in the field of the culture and arts. The culture industry is a branch of industry that deals specifically with the production of culture and has influenced the traditional high arts all over the world. Globalization, market economy and development of capitalism affect the arts and culture with the help of culture industry and make them a commodity and its production becomes market oriented. The audience becomes passive and just a consumer of the product. In India also the tradition of classical high art has been affected by the culture industry. Culture industry dominates the art, artists and the audience also. It lays its impact on whole art world and in this process the popular art becomes dominant which is a product and source of income of the culture industry.



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Introduction

The present paper tries to study the cultural journey sociologically, taking into consideration the major changes that have taken place in the field of classical traditional performing arts in India.

The researcher has tried to explain the process with reference to 'Culture Industry'. How in the process of globalization, market economy and development of capitalism the arts and culture become a commodity and its production becomes market oriented. The term culture industry was coined by the critical theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, and was presented as critical word in the chapter "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception", in the book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947). (Horkheimer & Adorno: 1972)

The present researcher found the concept applicable to the cultural journey in India. Where the rich classical tradition of performing arts is transiting and at the same time popular art forms are encroaching high culture in a similar way as Adorno and Horkheimer argued in their essay. High culture is being affected by the products of culture industry.

Research Methodology

For the present paper researcher has used primary and secondary sources. Along with secondary sources the researcher has interviewed some upcoming artists and some renowned artists in Pune. The qualitative method helped the researcher to analyze the impact of culture industry and capitalism on the classical performing arts in India.

Culture Industry

The term "culture industry" is intended to refer to the commercial marketing of culture, the branch of industry that deals specifically with the production of culture that is in contrast to "authentic culture".

Adorno and Horkheimer proposed that popular culture is similar to a factory producing standardized cultural goods such as films, radio programmes, magazines, etc. that are used to manipulate mass society into passivity (Horkheimer & Adorno: 107). Consumption of the easy pleasures of popular culture, made available by the mass communications media, makes people passive and satisfied, regardless to their economic circumstances. The inherent danger of the culture industry is the cultivation of false psychological needs that can only be met and satisfied by the products of capitalism; thus Adorno and Horkheimer especially perceived mass-produced culture as dangerous to the more technically and intellectually difficult high arts. They are concerned with the production of cultural content in capitalist societies.

Horkheimer and Adorno contend that industrially produced culture affects the capacity of imagination and thinking of the audience. The culture industry delivers the 'goods' so that the people then only have left the task of consuming them. Through mass production, everything becomes homogenized and whatever diversity remains is of less importance.

The aims of the culture industry are economic in nature. Emphasis is given to an economic success only. Authentic culture, however, is not goal-oriented. It promotes the human capacity of imagination, but in a different way than the culture industry does. Authentic culture does not become channeled into repeating reality but goes levels beyond such. It is unique and cannot be forced into any pre-formed structure.

While founding the causes of the development of the culture industry, Horkheimer and Adorno argued that it arises from companies' pursuit of the maximization of profit, in the economic sense. However, this cannot be said to be culture. It can only be described as being a form of commerce, just like any other kind of commerce.

For Adorno, the term "culture industry" does not refer to "mass culture", or the culture of the masses of people. Mass culture is produced by the masses and it represents the ideas of masses. On the contrary, such involvement of the masses is missing in the art produced by the culture industry. Adorno argues that what is actually occurring is a type of 'defrauding of the masses'. Horkheimer and Adorno deliberately chose the term 'culture industry' instead of 'mass culture' or 'mass media'.

Thus due to the impact of culture industry art has become salable commodity and thus the processes like "de-artification" and "commodification" of art have taken place in different societies. This means that every work of art is then available for others to use and turned into a consumer product and is shaped by the logic of capitalist rationality (i.e. whatever sells best).

Indian scenario

In the field of Indian Arts similar situation is apparent to some extent. In India there is a rich tradition of classical performing arts. These arts had spiritual importance in society. Many of these arts traditionally have been performed in temples as a holy service to God and it had an incredible religious significance. Thus the artists were ritualistic performers and had a due respect in society. The audience was also very devoted and looked at it as a service to god. The content of the art was also religious and full of '*Bhakti Rasa*' (Devotional spirit). No doubt due to social, historical and political changes later it became a source of entertainment. Though the artists started performing their art for livelihood, they tried their best to keep the art alive, and to maintain the creativity and passion. The appreciation level of the audience was also very high. Thus the art production was very intellectual and could fulfill the satisfaction level of both the artists and the audience. These arts faced many ups and downs in society but the artists never threw away creativity and loyalty towards the art. However, when the capitalism started developing, it brought with itself market economy, mass production and mass consumption. Resultantly these traditional arts started losing their character and started falling into a false image of just one of the sources of entertainment and earning.

The artists and the exponents honestly tried to sustain, preserve and develop the art. Though this tradition of classical art has survived and has not lost its character completely, it always has faced a constant threat and competition from popular arts. There is a basic difference in the character and nature of the classical art and the popular art. Still the culture industry has challenged and affected the classical arts/ high culture. High culture encompasses the cultural objects of aesthetic value, which a society collectively esteems as exemplary art. (Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1983) Rev. Ed. p. 92.)

To explain the process well the present researcher has taken an example of cultural changes that occurred in a traditionally known cultural city which is even known as a cultural hub. That is Pune in Maharashtra. A brief historical and cultural review of the city helps to understand the process.

History & Culture of the City

History of Pune: Pune is one of the older cities in India. The history of Pune is closely associated to the history of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the founder of the Maratha Empire, and the Peshwa, the ministers of the Maratha Empire.

Pune was an important centre for the social and religious reform movements. Pune is also associated with the struggle for Indian independence. After Indian Independence, an educational, industrial and cultural development took place in Pune.

The city gained the reputation of being the 'Oxford of the East' due to a large number of educational institutes. In 1990 Pune began to attract foreign capital. In 2000 Pune saw a huge development in the Information Technology sector, and IT Parks. Thus one can say the all-round development could be experienced in Pune.

Culture of Pune: Pune is said to be the cultural capital of the state of Maharashtra. It has a rich cultural heritage since centuries. It is considered as a cultural hub due to the charisma of some renowned artists and some cultural associations and establishments. There is a cluster of traditional performing arts in Pune. The arts which are originated in other parts of India have also been deeply rooted in the city, for example, some classical dance styles. This led to the establishment of some of the significant cultural organizations and the social environment of the city has helped to develop them. To illustrate;

1. Bharat Gayan Samaj (1911) promoting Indian Classical, Poona Music Society (1946)- promoting Western classical, Arya Sangeet Prasarak Mandali (1951) - organizing Sawai Gandharva Sangeet Mahotsav.

2. Kathak- Nritya Bharati (1947) founded by Pt. Rohini Bhate, Bharata Natyam-Kalavardhini: founded by Pt. Sucheta Chapekar Bhide. Parikrama Dance festival, Organised by Kalavardhini

These organizations have played an important role in preserving, maintaining and developing the rich tradition of high culture. Bharat Gayan Samaj, Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal, Nritya Bharati and Kalavardhini are the milestones in this regard. They have not only helped to maintain the performing arts but have given them a glory and glamour all over the world.

Some exponents like Pandita Rohini Bhate (Kathak Artist), Pandita Sucheta Chapekar Bhide (Bharata Natyam artist), Pandit Bhimsen Joshi (a great vocalist) contributed a lot to the high culture by devoting their lives for the sake of art.

In spite of the honest and sincere efforts of these exponents and their devoted disciples, the classical traditional art world has been affected by the **culture industry**. The economic and industrial development and the changing composition of the city population have definitely affected its cultural traditions. A parallel development of popular culture and its mass production has been initiated. It has laid its impact even on the glamorous festivals like Sawai Gandharva Sangeet Mahotsav and other traditional cultural events in the city. The Sawai Gandharva Sangeet festival has an identity and tradition since last 70 years. It is one of the world famous cultural activities in Pune. It is an annual Indian Classical music festival held in Pune since 1953. The festival is hosted by the Arya Sangeet Prasarak Mandal (ASPM) and initiated by Pt. Bhimsen Joshi as a memorial music conference commemorating the life and work of his guru, Sawai Gandharva.

The festival is known for the highly creative, intellectual and promising performances of renowned artists in India. It is one of the prestigious cultural events in Pune. The quality audience and their appreciation level are well developed. It became a part of Pune culture.

Impact of Culture Industry on Indian High art

However since last couple of decades the above mentioned scenario is changing due to the impact of market economy, advertising agencies, growing expenses of the festival and varied demands of the audience. It can be said that the 'culture Industry' has started laying its impact. Even the Sawai Gandharva Sangeet festival has also been affected by the material changes that have occurred in society. Still the festival is being organized; renowned artists are performing and giving their best. However the demands and the behaviour of the audience, targets of the sponsors, marketing gimmicks, and interference of the advertizing

agencies are being responsible to create unhealthy social environment for the artists and their art to flourish. It seems that attending the festival has become just a source of entertainment and a status symbol for a large number of audiences and the money making became important for the organizers and sponsors. Public demands are being more important than the art presentation. Many factors are responsible for it but the impact of capitalism and culture industry is clearly visible.

Similarly all traditional festivals and music and dance concerts are facing such changes. No doubt that the so called 'targets' of fund collection are being achieved. The renowned artists are still performing but somehow the festival has started losing its spirit and the glamorous tradition. In the ethnographic interviews some artists of older generation have regretted it. One senior vocal artist in Pune, Ms. Anjali Apte, regrets that, "the composition and the quality of the audience is changing. The 'crowd' just wants an entertainment thus they want lavish seating arrangements, variety of the food stalls at the place of festival and many more facilities rather than the presentation of a quality art. They just want to celebrate the event." She further added that, "This has happened due to the impact of some of the western dance and musical shows (Electronic dance music shows (EDM)) which are seeking popularity among the younger crowd and they are expecting the same type of entertainment here."

A renowned dancer Ms. Sujata Natu, who is running her dance institute in Pune for more than 50 years told that, "Apart from the constant efforts taken by many artists these changes are occurring. They are trying to maintain the arts but the growing materialism, consumerism and the changing composition of the audience, it is becoming difficult to organize programmes and fulfilling the demands of a varied audience. Audience is demanding some popular content and themes which is against the traditions. No doubt that the artists are trying to include new content in their choreographies and programmes within the limits of tradition, still the audience is being attracted towards popular arts."

One younger artist, Ms. Neha Muthiyan, who is running her own classical dance school told in her interview that, "the number of students enrolling to classical dance school is continuously growing but the dropout rate is also very high as the girls' and even parents' liking is more towards the popular dance. Even parents insist to teach popular dance (film dance) instead of classical dance. Learning classical dance is a lengthy process and people want fast results. This is regrettable."

This transition in the field of high art is showing the impact of popular culture and culture industry. Remarkable growth in city population, migration, emergence of cosmopolitan culture, globalization and many more factors are affecting the high arts. It has changed the cultural aspirations of the audience. Due to the globalization, growing consumerism and the urge for “sheer” entertainment the culture industry has started producing new forms of popular culture.

It is evident in growing popularity of the dance and music reality shows, big banner competitions and the world fame EDM (Electronic dance music) concerts. The city is experiencing an encroachment of modern worldwide trends in the field of arts. One of them is **Sunburn festival** (EDM concert). It is a commercial electronic dance music festival held in India. From 2007 to 2015, it took place in Vagator, Goa, India every year, but in 2016 it was shifted to Pune, Maharashtra. It is Asia's largest music festival. The 10th anniversary celebration of Sunburn festival took place in Pune, Maharashtra. After a much controversy the festival is moved from Goa to Pune, at the Kesanand hills, Pune.

Moving to a new place, one of the world’s largest music festivals saw a phenomenal turnout. It happened with a massive layout, huge stages, state of the art production, and best technology with a thrilled artist line up.

It is said that the fans from all parts of the country and from over 30 countries attended the festival with a large majority coming in from the Middle East, Europe and South East Asia. It is also said that Sunburn 10 contributed approximately Rs.1.4 crores as direct revenue to the government and generated a business of about INR 250 crores for the region through hotel, F&B, transport and miscellaneous expenses incurred. Festival, attracts more than 3,50,000 people and hundreds of artists every year. Maximization of profit and achieving the material goals are the characteristics of culture industry.

Here culture industry is playing its role. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, "The culture industry undeniably speculates on the conscious and unconscious state of the millions towards which it is directed, the masses are not primary, but secondary, they are an object of calculation; an appendage of the machinery. The costumer is not king, as culture industry would like to have us believe, not its subject but its object." (Adorno Theodor W. and Anson G. Rabinbach. *Culture Industry Reconsidered*, New German Critique No. 6 (Autumn, 1975), pp. 12-19 Published By: Duke University Press) One can easily relate it to today's scenario of these 'cultural events'. Many people just attend it as consumers, who just are consuming the art products produced by the culture industry.

The art presented in such events is also a diluted form of western classical high art produced by culture industry for the maximization of profit. Appreciation of the art, love for music and respect towards art and artists are the least important things in such festivals. The traditional classical artworks promote expertise, but the culture industry reviles these capacities. Its cultural products are generally available to everyone's understanding. Due to its impact people are expecting the similar kind of entertainment and amusement from the traditional cultural events like Sawai Gandharva Sangeet Mahotsav or Parikrma dance festival.

Since last two decades such kind of events are growing in different areas of the city for example, **Vh1 Supersonic, NH7 Weekender**. These are annual, multi-city and multi-genre, music festivals held in India. With a musically diverse line up, multiple carefully prepared stages and lively experience zones, there is plenty to choose from these festivals. Since last decade these festivals have been established in Pune gaining growing popularity amongst the youths. Rock, Pop music, Independent music, Hip hop music, Electronic dance music, Stand-up comedy are the main contents of such festivals. As mentioned earlier such events are the cultural productions of capitalist society. The aim of the culture industry is maximization of profit. All activities are focused on economic success. Thus the events are being considered successful as they are generating a huge profit. Culture industry is a main phenomenon of late capitalism, which encompasses all products and form of light entertainment from Bollywood films to elevator music. All these forms of popular culture are designed to satisfy the growing needs of mass capitalistic consumers for entertainment. Adorno specifically notes that the term "culture industry" was chosen over "mass culture" in order to make sure that it is not understood as something which spontaneously stems from the masses themselves.

Though these kinds of festivals are not the part of Pune's traditional culture or they don't suit to the traditional identity of the city they have not only started establishing themselves but have badly affected the art traditions of Pune. It is evident that the Sunburn festival shifting to Pune was a conscious decision of Goa state government. It was primarily due to the fact that Sunburn festival has build negative image over years in mind of locals due to drug abuses, crime increase, noise and polluting the surroundings. The Sunburn festival faced a strong opposition in Pune. It was being opposed by some groups, social activists and local villagers claiming that it promotes nudity, obscenity, alcohol and drugs rather than

producing a peace of mind, contentedness and long lasting pleasure which actually are the aims of a good art.

In spite of a strong opposition of locals, NGOs, religious organizations and after a crucial controversy, these festivals have established themselves in Pune with a huge popularity and big fund raising.

Conclusions

This brief review of the transition in the field of Indian arts helped the researcher to draw some conclusions.

Capitalism has laid its impact on the folk and classical traditional arts in India.

The emergence of capitalism and market economy initiated the emergence of culture industry that brought major changes in the field of classical performing arts. In this whole process the popular arts became important which are produced by the culture industry for the maximization of profit. They are not at all aimed to fulfill the conventional functions of the art and the needs of the 'audience' rather they aim at entertaining the 'crowd' for maximization of the profit which is in favour of capitalists. Thus the monetary profit and amusement of the crowd are the only functions performed by such art products.

It definitely has affected the high art. 'Public' or 'crowd' has started expecting the same outputs from the traditional arts and festival also and the size of such crowd is rising than the number of audience.

This is the main challenge before the classical arts and the artists today.

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