

INDIAN POPULAR CULTURE

Lecture10

Print Culture

Let us discuss print culture in India or its inception it where it began before moving into print culture we saw the history of Indian popular culture we also discussed popular culture in India and how the discourse around them is so complex and the desire for cultural studies And also we looked into the idea of Indian popular culture situated in Maharashtra. How the Mela, that is the Ganesh Mela and the Satya Shodhak Mela, bring us to a discussion as to what can be construed as popular and what can be construed as culture. The discourse around it, though it might seem very localized, can be implemented across the other cultures inside India.

Moving on to the discourse or, the emergence of print culture in India. There are a few scholars who have worked extensively on, print culture, one of them being Abhijit Gupta. He is a faculty in Jadavpur University. He has published on book and print history and how he located the first printing press in India.

So one can refer to his works to read more on print culture. Moving on to the inception and birth of print in India. Now, we see that there has been an accidental arrival. Why it is accidental and it is also called non-historical at the same time? Because that printing was on and off.

It was not in continuation and therefore, it is being referred to as non-historical or also as accidental. So, There was a press that was established in Goa in 1556. This was the first-ever printing press in India. But again, since it did not continue, there were other issues with this printing press.

It is not construed or, referred to as the first. Now, there is another, printed piece available in the Tamil language which is which became the first Indian language to be printed so it was published in Indic characters in 1577 in Goa This can be construed as the first evidence of printing that happened in Goa in the Tamil

language. There was another piece in the Tamil language, which was printed from Lisbon in 1554.

But since it was published in Roman script, we cannot say that it was the first ever. During 1674-75, a printing press was brought to the island of Bombay for the first time by Bhimji Parekh. Mr. Bhimji Parekh was a broker in the East India Company and he had a bit of access to the resources since he worked for the East India Company. That could be one of the reasons why he was able to do that. And it is a rare case of local initiative, while most of the printing was done by missionaries because of the Christianizing mission that was happening during colonization.

We see that many priests and, the the colonizers had started these mission presses across India to publish on religious aspects, religious books and texts. Basically, most were translations. Now, the inception of print in India, we see happening in Tranquibur. Tranquebar is actually an anglicized name.

It is a place in Tamil Nadu. And we see the first Danish Lutheran missionary doing a translation in Tamil. printing it in Tamil in 1714. This was the first full-length translation of the New Testament in any South Asian language. And therefore, it becomes even more important.

Now, the Shri Rampur Mission Press was founded by William Carey William Ward and many others. They were all British Baptist missionaries. Shri Rampur is a place close to Calcutta. And we see all the printing again, the iconography also going back to Calcutta. Calcutta was the initiator of the center for British Rule for quite some time.

Therefore, we see that in 1800, this Sri Rampur Mission Press was started. It was in many ways a printing revolution. The newspapers that we see that came into existence, which are also through print, again started in Calcutta in 1776 by Mr. William Boltz, who had resigned from the company and wanted to do some personal trade. He left the job and then he started or attempted to start a newspaper, which we don't know whether it fruitfully developed or not. Now, in 1780, James Augustus Hicky started the Bengal Gazette, or it is also known as the Calcutta General Advertiser.

Even the inception of advertisement in print is seen through the Bengal Gazette. So it is remarkably very important. The first newspaper in Madras, the Madras Courier, came into existence in 1785. It was an officially recognized newspaper founded by Richard Johnson. And all these people that we are seeing who are responsible for the inception of the newspaper are all English.

Then something called censorship arrived when in 1799, the Madras Gadget had to submit a record or, general statement, one can say, orders of government for security by the military secretary before publication. So this was, in a way, a scrutiny that resulted in censorship in newspapers. Now some signposts for the spread of literacy. Now print revolution brought in education in a way because the lack of books will ultimately lead to less illiteracy.

Therefore, it can be seen that 19th century India underwent a print revolution coming from the inception of print and also the newspaper at the same time. In 1812, we see the first Tamil classic getting printed. Then we have Aesop's fable was translated into Marathi in the same period. The first Hindi periodical appeared again in Calcutta in 1826, while the great period of Hindi literature commenced with Bharatendu Harishchandra.

Bharatendu Harishchandra was a very intellectual person. He was a poet and he was also a journalist. So he was a combination of all three and it helped in the development of Hindi literature. Now, in Kerala, the influential Malayalam Manorama was founded in 1890. So we see how the 19th century had been, the reason for literacy as well as the print revolution in India.

Now, religious sentiments and print advertisements. It is intriguing to note that with the print, with the advertisement, and as we will be talking about iconography, we see that religious sentiments were mixed or merged in some ways with print advertisement. Bhavani Charan Bandopadhyay established some Acharya Chandrika Press and his publication, in a way was a curious mix of sacred and profane. he was a very intelligent man.

He also shows signs of marketing in a way, though marketing had not, in an official sense entered the market. So, on one hand, he published sacred Hindu texts as a chapter from Padma Purana. This is happening in 1823 and three volumes of Srimad Bhagabat. And then we have Manu Samhita in 1833.

He advertises to people that he is using Brahmin people and also using holy water in the ink to print these books. On the other hand, on the one hand, he is producing sacred Hindu texts. On the other hand, he produces risky urban sketches such as Kalikata Kamalale and others. Again a dichotomy to understand Bhabanicharan. Abhijit Gupta, as mentioned earlier, has noted that Bhavani Chandra had put out advertisements saying, that his edition of Gita was printed by Brahmin compositors and that the holy water from the Ganges was used to purify the ink. So it is in a way a marketing technique so that the work he might have done, not contesting, but also at the same time advertising and saying that the usage of, getting people who are Brahmins And using the holy water from the Ganges in the printing kind of affects the consumption.

And then Swapan Chakraborty, points out that he imprints, his imprints were raised by subscription. So there was a subscription-based model for his printing or, maybe he has borne it himself. Or as in the case of Assam, Burunji and Haliram Phukan, who gave away copies. So, according to Swapan Chakraborty, this subscription-based was also born by himself. And in the cases of the texts that were printed, who then gave away copies?

The history of print in Madras. One centre was Bengal for printing and the other was Madras. So, literary patronages in Tamil Nadu lingered on till the second half of the 19th century. We see this happening. Then an illustrator, Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, affiliated to institutions of both traditional math and modern college. So he is bringing the modern and the traditional together, marking him as a transitional figure, who holds on to all the knowledge and intellectual at the same time. Participation in the marketplace is where we see Pillai's disciple, who is Swaminathan Iyer and then the great Tamil poet Subramanian Bharati. Subramanian Bharati will appear in poetry. He will appear when we talk and discuss visual narrative cinema and also in comics.

He was indeed a very remarkable figure in Tamil Nadu or in Tamil patronage, literary patronage as we can say. Venkatachalapathy in his book writes, that the middle class had emerged and therefore entertained the hegemonic aspirations. Since the middle class has emerged fully, it's not like sloping down or it is stable and now even entertains hegemonic aspirations. we also see the period increasing, increasing the number of women readership in this period and this is

happening post World War One, now printed in colonial Hindi public sphere
There is a scholar, a professor, Francesca Orsini.

She is working at SOAS, University of London. She has worked extensively in Indian culture, the Hindi language. And that brings us to the discussion of how the colonizers, in a way, are now writing about the Indian culture and language by studying the Hindi language. So it is very interesting to note.

The remarkable growth of literary journals such as Madhuri, Camd, Sudha, Visal Bharati and Sarasvati were political weeklies and dailies in every city. We see the emergence of magazines some Hindi popular magazines like Manorama, and Grishobha coming into existence. It is very remarkable to see who the consumers were. These consumers were basically middle-class women.

In the last slide, if we go back, we see it concluded with the increase in women's readership. So coming of these texts in the colonial Hindi spaces or spheres, we see the middle-class women reading these magazines. It also reveals vigorous and wide-ranging debates and, as explained, eager readership. Now, in the 1920s, the substantial market and public for high and useful literature increased in Hindi, finally realizing the expectations of the reformist intellectuals. It became an authoritative samskara. These reformist intellectuals were Swami Vivekananda, then we have Dayananda Saraswati, we had Raja Ram Mohan Roy. So these were the reformist intellectuals of that period who in a way helped the growth of the Hindi language.

Entertainment was devalued and the rich production of booklets chapbooks and songs had to be shifted through useful moral filters. So up to reading magazines in a way, because they were political weeklies, it was considered to be rich. But entertainment was devalued in the Hindi language we are talking about. Therefore, they needed some filters.

They needed some sifting. And then what was in their terms morally correct or morally could be endorsed was accepted as literature. The same thing happened with other languages also. Now, There is something called private consumption and passionate modernity.

There are scholars like Sanjay Srivastava who have written on Hindi detective fiction. And these Hindi detective fiction are the sites for soft porn as discussed.

Now, when we talk about private consumption and passionate modernity, it is situated in these magazines. Anandita Ghosh has identified this tradition as Keecha literature, as it is called, which used to give scandalous gossip of the high society of Calcutta. It is not just limited to the high-class society of Calcutta, but it can be found in other regions as well with different names.

The theme, and the kind of subjects that were consumed were more or less similar in nature, but only the difference in title. In the 19th century, the whole neighbourhood of North Calcutta called Bat-tala was populated by publishers of cheap printed books. which were considered to be the Bengali equivalent of Victorian penny dreadfuls. So in a way, we now know which was the hub, that place where the publication was taking place.

Again, the inception of the passionate modernity or private consumption print was We see its reference going back to Calcutta. So since Bengal and Madras had grown early in the domain of printing, They were first for every other category or theme of printing that is what we can observe from here. Historian Gautam Bhadra has done copious work on this, identifying the passionate modernity, as it is called, or private consumption.

We now see that Venkata Chalapati had also given or dedicated a chapter on Gujjili publications in Tamil Nadu, which is of a similar print history. And Sanjay Srivastav, as I mentioned, has described this tradition in his book, *Passionate Modernity, Sexuality, Class and Consumption in India*. Coming back to Hindi detective fiction, these prints, and books were mostly available in the railway stations where people could firsthand have a glimpse of these books and it used to be very cheap. This gave rise to the readership of these kinds of fiction, which had, as he calls passionate modernity kind of content.

It was not porn, but it was at the threshold of what can be called as sexual content. We also see that These books were popular amongst a certain class of people or a group of people. Basically, the lower strata of people who did not have access to, say, TV or Internet or other, sexual content. The characters like Savita Bhabhi and Velamma have been theorized by many scholars.

There has been significant work on these books or comics or print that we are now discussing over the sexual content that it produced. and In a way, it acted as what now through the Internet, it is available to everyone on their phones, porn.

They catered to the passions of numerous Indians of those times through print. There were few popular magazines coming from North, a few in different languages. In Rajasthani, there was a magazine which was called Moomal. Another one was called Manak. These are the popular Rajasthani magazines that we are discussing. And then we have Hindi, which is we had Grishoba.

We had Sarita, Meri Saheli. Again, catering to women. The name itself suggests that it is for women. We don't see any popular magazine which is meant for men. The reason, again, could be that the publishing houses might have surveyed to understand that largely the women population are homemakers and therefore they can cater to their needs and demands through these magazines, which included some home remedies.

They also included some recipes and other themes that cater to typically women. In Bengali, we had another set of popular magazines like Parichay, Kritivas, Chithi, Kalol, Sonibarar, etc. In the south also we see that they were popular magazines.

A few of them in three languages that we can acquire, that we were able to acquire was in Malayalam we had Manorama, we had Manoranjayam, we had Mangalam, we had Giri Lakshmi. Then in Tamil, we have another list out of which Baal Bharti was for children and then we have Viveka Chintamani we have India we have Chakravartini all these are based on popular magazines the names again similar to the ones in Hindi and the north Indian languages we see names are similar which means they are catering to again the women and in Telugu we had on Andhra Bhumi and Swati.