

INDIAN POPULAR CULTURE

Lecture05

Sub Cultures and Counterculture

Now, moving on to how subcultures emerge, who participates, and why, It is very interesting to note how the emergence of these subcultures has taken place and who have been the participants. Has there any change that has been taken place in time or not? It is as it started. Now, in order to understand, we see the primary focus has been the adult.

OK, so we see the youth culture, the youth culture, the emergence of the youth culture, including numerous scholars, has been to understand the reason behind young individuals' involvement in subcultures, frequently with the goal of reducing instances of deviant behavior and delinquency. So basically, these Scholars have tapped that there is individual young individuals involvement with the delinquent culture. And then we also see that. It kind of, the goal is to reduce the instances of these delinquent behavior.

Now, given the most. people associate subcultures with youth, not just people, but many scholars. Now we look into how do subcultures emerge. So subcultures emerge because of modernization, because of postmodernization, because of social contradiction, because of sharing, borrowing and rejecting. Now how it is placed?

Let's discuss that. Now in modernization, what happens is, because of the enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, there was a development of a new age that radically transformed societies. Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution was a huge thing all over the globe. Be it French Revolution or the English Revolution or the other industrial revolutions that took part in several cities and several states across the globe.

It impacted the life of the people. It transformed the societies at large. And then what happened comparatively in contemporary societies, our identities have become disconnected from fixed social roles. So the standard of living when

modernization took place because of Industrial Revolution increased. We see the, the proletariat, the bourgeois and the capitalist, how the working class,

during industrialization because of the unequal distribution of labor. Now, comparatively, we are here discussing about the disconnect. Now, how even Garner has given this example that he used to stay in a neighborhood where 600 people were there and everyone knew everyone. And that was their world. Even their parents had not gone far outside, maybe the city or maybe few cities, visited few cities in the country.

But he, on the contrary, is travelling every now and then to various different countries. And therefore, he says that identities have become disconnected. Now, it might also mean that no identity is singular, it is plural. You are not associating yourself with the identity of the neighborhood and therefore you feel that it is disconnected from the fixed social roles.

So when you stay at one place, at one neighborhood, you have some fixed social roles. OK, but as you move out, you step out, it becomes disconnected, disengaging with those identities with which you once identified. We take the notion of youth for granted. But they are relatively modern inventions. So the term youth is not an old concept.

It's a modern invention because During the world wars, be it World War I or World War II, we have seen that the parents were far especially the father if they are participating in the world war. They were far and therefore the children grew up quickly and also matured very quickly. So this youth where people now in a way are seen was very different in those times and therefore This youth that subcultures emerged and is talking about it is post-World War.

So post-World War, so many things changed. And this change in a way has resulted in giving a different meaning of what youth is. It's calling it a modern invention and allowing new generations both time and money to explore subcultural activities. So nowadays we see that both the parents are working. And they have good earning and now they can provide time and money to their children.

Their children need not worry about tomorrow what is going to happen. And therefore, it becomes easy and convenient for them to indulge in subcultural

activities and experiment with these subcultures. In today's day or in the contemporary society, the daily existence represents a cultural arena. Now, whatever is happening on an everyday basis, we see that it represents a certain kind of a cultural arena where there is continuous battle to defy both collective and individual identities.

So, constant battle is going between collective identity and individual identity because every day a culture is being produced. The every day has become an arena of culture. And therefore, this is happening, ultimately striving for self-determination. So the end goal is self-determination. But to reach to that, you need to go through a battle and define what collective and individual identities mean.

And then only, the debate over the emergence of subculture or how it affects the identity can be traced or answered. Second, what post-modernity does for in order to evolve? First is the conflict of the identity that modernism brings along with it. Second is the modernity and not to be a clear and concise explanation, it says. They are a product of broader social fragmentation.

So again, postmodernity is about fragmentation. It is about chaos and reassembly of past elements into a seemingly random mixture lacking inherent significance. Postmodernism. Society is in fragments. It is a random mixture of things.

And that is, in a way, bringing in to ask questions that why there is a lack of inherent significance, and also talking about or trying to reassemble the past. So, so many things are getting involved in this postmodern contemporary society, which is in a way leading, there is some sort of destabilization happening, which also leads to formation of subcultures. There was a song called The Age of Plastic and it got aired first time in MTV in the year 1981. What is so significant about this particular song is that his singing ability became secondary to the image of the singer and a singer must now construct forging herself into a visually appealing marketing brand.

This is again associated with post-modernity. What happens in post-modern age? Your identity in a way becomes secondary and you become a brand in a marketplace. So you yourself are the product.

Your art is secondary. That is not what is giving you the identity. It is the image that is producing some sort of identity for you. And then we have in the context of subcultures arises as merely another collection of representation within the broader spectacle of popular culture, which is accentuated by mass media.

So subcultures arise merely as merely another collection of representations. So there is a collection of representation in the mainstream. But you decide that I am not going to adhere to the collective representation that is given to me by the mainstream society. Rather, I will make my own within the broader spectacle of popular culture.

And again, it will be accentuated by the mass media because mass media has already crept in. It is part and parcel of subcultures already. And therefore, we see postmodernity also trying to bring in what is called as subculture. Then we have social contradictions. Exploring of class-based resistance indicates that working class youth adopt subcultures in societies that promise equal opportunities and wealth, but perpetuate significant inequalities.

Now, an individual will always want to be at a place where there is classlessness, where there is equal opportunity. So the working class or people who, kind of emerge from a these mainstream societies, they are seen as resisting, this resistance happening at a class level. It is not like individual people coming from different places, but it is a class of people who are in a way exploring this resistance. And it is indicating that working class youth have adopted this subculture in societies because of the inequalities and they also want equal wealth distribution being another reason. Subcultures emerge to solve the tension or the problem of the society. Now, these social contradictions also say that subcultures are not only a deviant or as it was later called by the Birmingham school as the new tribe, but it is giving some sort of solution to the problems of the society that were pre-existent because of the mainstream culture. Lastly, another reason which gives rise to subculture is sharing, borrowing and rejecting.

Now, the evaluation of youth subculture such as punks, skinheads, mods, teddy boys, etc, Often it might appear as a linear progression that, once a subculture like punk ends, then there is emergence of skinheads. Then once the skinhead ends, then there is emergence of mod. And it seems like a linear progression, but it is not. It is not at all.

Rather, what is observed is that subcultures arise from a complex interplay of various influences. So these are not singular. They are complex in nature. So little bit you take from one, little bit from the other. And then it's a mix or complex interplay.

And subcultures interact with and respond to one another. So what they are doing is they are sharing, they are borrowing and at the same time they are rejecting. It's not that they will, integrate all the aspects of one subculture. They might reject a few and little bit they might borrow and rest they might share. So this also in a way give rise to more subcultures.

Finally, why do people participate? What is the reason for people to join these subcultures or start these subcultures? Often people might think that there is something wrong with their brain. There is some, they are unsound. Often people think that.

But D.J. Williams, who was a psychotherapist, Suggested that there is nothing wrong with these people, these participants. And they refer themselves to as sanguinarians and are generally healthy and well adjusted. Who share a similar interest in what is considered deviant leisure. He gives an example of black whale.

This comes from, blood blood-drinking vampire subculture where people who belong to that subculture will come to a place together. And in that ceremony, they will be drinking blood. And it says that it emphasizes principles such as prioritizing safety. So the people have a code of ethics.

These people who belong to these subcultures, this example coming from blood-drinking vampire subculture, prioritize safety. They obtain consent, embrace diversity, and they also show respect to their elders. So it's not construed it's not what has been construed about them or one should not assume on the basis of theoretical approaches rather there should be an empirical study done in order to come up with the analysis where it is said that these people are not irresponsible as it is shown they have their own code of ethics it is just that their identities their mentalities align with each other. And in a way, it is seen as an escapism so people who want to escape from the reality from the mainstream they are the people who participate it is also seen as a release of anger so specially metalheads so there are band groups called

metal bands rock metal bands few examples are like Metallica and then you have iron maiden very famous metal bands and the kind of songs that they sing or the kind of songs that they write are in a way they are pouring their anger and the growling sound that they make it is a way where they are bringing out their anger and the people who participate in these bands or who kind of attend these concerts are the people also who are part of very much part of that subculture of the metalheads where they are also along with the singers, they growl and shout loudly so that their anger, their anxiety comes out in that form. And lastly, to cope up or To escape from stress. So another reason is escape and stress in other parts of their lives.

They choose these communities. So these are the people who engage themselves in subculture along with the people who do not align with mainstream society as a response. And we are dealing with the contemporary subcultures. Moving on to the discussion of counterculture. We last discussed what is subculture and counterculture in many ways is similar to what is subculture.

But there is a stark difference in what we call as counterculture. Two, or three features that make it different from subculture is one feature is that it is always accompanied with some social movement. Unlike subcultures and subcultures predominantly die after a certain point of time. But what happens with subculture, what happens with popular culture? We will now discuss counterculture.

Now, counterculture and subculture are different yet similar in nature. they also sort of develop from deviant cultures initially but the key feature of counterculture is that they are accompanied by some social movements and these social movement helps them get integrated into the main culture after a point of time. The term counterculture entered this meaning through sociology and according to Theorist Talcott Parsons, he used it to describe deviant subcultures such as delinquent gangs. Again, the meaning of coming from subculture, the deviant, the delinquent, these terminologies are being used for both.

But It positions itself in complete opposition to the prevailing culture. So, the prevailing culture is basically the mainstream culture and it is in opposition. It adopts the values of the dominant culture but interprets them in a negative light. So, it is taking

things from the mainstream culture, but it is putting them in a negative light, offering alternative perspectives of value. So, the values are put in different perspectives, in alternative perspectives of the main culture. Now, there is a set of norms and values that kind of contradict the dominant norms and values of the society of which that group is part and this again is similar to what is just mentioned before but this definition initially or the meaning is given by Larkin and the other one is given by Yinger. So according to Yinger

The same is mentioned as contradictory to the dominant norms and values of the society, in a way oppositional. Now, there exists a critique of the dominant culture, similar to the critiques of popular culture and mass culture and subculture. It is a sort of rejection of the dominant culture and exists within the context of the social movement. Yes, so this is what I was talking about that it rejects the dominant culture. What counterculture is doing is it is rejecting the dominant culture and it is also in a way contextualizing itself through a social movement.

Now what is this social movement? What Foss and Larkin tell us about social movement is that it is a collective action because it is undertaken by a group of people which may or may not involve violence interfering. So the condition is clear. It may or may not involve violence with the political and cultural reproduction of society.

This is basically what is meant by social movement and this gets accumulated with what we call as counterculture. Now, the emergence. Where do we see the emergence of what we call as counterculture? So, it is very interesting to note that in San Francisco, in the fall of 1965, people moved to the Ashbury and the Golden Gate Park.

And who are these people? These people were looking as if they were on the brink of poverty. They wore used clothes, begged for money and lived in crash pads with little or no mattress for furnishing. And they were referred to as hippies.

So this is happening around 1965. Now, here we see the emergence of counterculture. This counterculture can also be in a way, understood as subculture. So similar time frame, we see the emergence of subculture also happening post World War II. Subculture can be seen a little ahead of time as compared to the emergence that happened in San Francisco in the year 1965.

Now, the counterculture in the mid-1960s, when young individuals within the middle-class youth movement began identifying themselves as such. This emergence occurred as political concerns and became intertwined with cultural matters. So basically, what happened was these young individual youths, Again, counterculture also revolves around youth individuals and that too is getting started in the middle-class youth, amongst the middle-class youth. And this movement began identifying themselves as such, as countercultures.

There were political concerns that were getting addressed, but it got intertwined with cultural matters. The Woodstock Music Festival is very interesting to note which happened in the year 1969. A famous song the summer of 69 but it has no relevance to the Woodstock Music Festival. it showed the decline of this middle-class youth movement in 1969. So we see an emergence happening around that time and also the decline.

Soon we see the decline. But then what happens is we see a movement which was called the Women Liberation Movement, which began as a response to the sexism of male movement participants. So these participants in this domain were basically male. And as a counter to that, a women's liberation movement started as a response to that.

And in this post-movement era, the counterculture associated with them must be incorporated in some form or the other in the dominant culture. Because it needs to become institutionalized, it becomes spontaneously institutionalized later on in a phase. It can take 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, or even a decade. That does not matter. But post-movement, is always observed when it is associated with a social movement, which women's liberation movement.

It gets incorporated into the mainstream culture. Now, there are a lot of literary studies that were influenced by postmodernism and a direct descendant of countercultural celebrities through ethnic studies. So there were many institutions that were dealing with ethnic studies. These ethnic studies also integrated literature as a discipline influenced by postmodernism. As a response to this counterculture, there was a student

who designed a computer at Harvard University. And he designed this personal computer in order to organize anti-war protests. So we know that the Vietnam War protest was going on. And in order to organize it, a person is designing, a

student is designing a personal computer. That again is part and parcel of what we call as counterculture.

During the early 1970s, numerous organizations emerged to support participants in social movements. So later on, it got integrated so much to the social movement that not just the youth, the middle-class youth participated, but there were other numerous organizations also that emerged to participate or, join these forces in these movements. These counterculture movements took various shapes, including authoritarian communes led by charismatic figures. So there was a phase in this counterculture movement where we see that there is an authoritarian figure who is controlling the masses, who is controlling the people, who is controlling the individuals who come from a society. And such groups were huge in numbers.

They were basically cults coming out of various mainstream religions. One was the Mason's family. The other one was Hare Krishna, the spirit of flesh commune. And these were basically, more like a religious cult coming out from a mainstream religion and then there was a therapy cult that used to give seminars and training that also became part and parcel of what we now call as the cults which had charismatic figures who used to exert significant control on the members of the cult

Then we also see a few mechanistic Marxist groups and similar to the cults, they also had members and they also had leaders. But it was not authoritarian like the ones that we just discussed. A few of the mechanistic Marxist groups were the Weather Underground, National Caucus of Labor Committee, October League, Revolutionary Union and Oriental sects. One of the most salient results of counterculture was the burial of the Protestant ethics in America. So America was at a point influenced by Protestantism and then we see that

There is the degradation of. Protestantism. And it is falling. Questioning the ethics. And that was called.

The burial of Protestant ethics in America. The hippie culture. Which brought in sexual revolution. This is very important. Because this is where the.

Beginning or emergence. Of counterculture. Can be witnessed. Now hippie culture. As they were staying in small localities without many material things, they indulged in something called subversive of the dominant culture.

In contemporary culture, it emphasized waste consumption. These hippies lived with bare necessities and they had a kind of a guitar and an amp with them and they most often used to sing and they were also most often drugged not realizing the harsh realities of life so their agenda was to drive themselves away from the mainstream culture which has been telling them that how an individual should live their life in a society. And they are being subversive, moving out of the dominant culture.

They brought in the sexual revolution. For example, you do not need to be married to have a kid. So basically the American society no longer hinges upon marriage as an institution. They do believe that marriage is an institution, but they did not give marriage as an institution so much importance as they used to give earlier. So now a person can have two kids from two different partners.

And the society is not questioning, the American society is not questioning. It is quite liberal about the sexual resolution. If homosexuality was a taboo in American society, the hippies came up with group sex. They also came up with public sex, promiscuity and homosexuality, public nudity and pairing. So these things emerged from the hippie culture and therefore we see the sexual revolution happening at such an extreme pace or phase. They were also the precursors of what later came to be known as the English-speaking West as the counterculture. So it is from them that the word, counterculture comes from. The 1970s and 80s saw women in academia. So another counterculture movement was bringing women to academia.

For so long, even in America, America being such a liberal nation where gender disparity is almost negligible as compared to other parts of the world, saw women joining the academia in large numbers only in the 1980s and the 70s. And the major indicator or the crisis of masculinity was seen in bullying. So the emergence of bullying is a serious social issue. This again became another counterculture movement. And anti-bully was the social movement associated with it.

Now the problem with the American culture in general was that they had never undergone a crisis of masculinity and now was the time when it was a major indicator of the crisis of masculinity happening as the emergence of bullying was a serious issue, a serious social issue. Then between 1993 and 1996, we see the emergence of the Revolution of the white male, angry white male. And it was a minor social movement.

This author identified as the revolt of the angry young male, angry white male. Now, this revolution of the angry white male was against the idea of the crisis of masculinity. So, it was in a way an effect of what the crisis of masculinity was talking about. The angry white male had all the authority to protest against the implications of masculinity that had happened. Conclusion.

So to begin with the conclusion, we see that there was a cultural war that was going on because of the drug and the use of the liberal use of sexuality, which came from the hippie culture. Now, interestingly, only drugs and sexuality made to this cultural war. The rest of the countercultural elements or the countercultural subjects did not make it to the discussion of cultural wars, whether it should be part of the culture or it should be omitted. Then we see that there is opposition to drug use led to the drug war or the war on drugs.

And it was a clash between counterculture practices and the mainstream norms. While liberal views on sexuality, were adopted, at the same time, the views or the norms or the beliefs which were surrounding the women's reproductive rights, including access to abortion and health care, became contentions for battlegrounds. Now, why these became contentions for battlegrounds may be assumed that Because it is regarding the female, which is the other gender, we often see that men or the patriarchy want to control. We study the idea of what is biopolitics, how the body is not in control of oneself.

The state can at any time intrude in what you call as your body. So, similar kind of incidents are happening in American counterculture where sexuality is adopted by advertising whereas the issues regarding reproductive rights, the women are not able to decide for themselves or the agency is not given to the women to decide. Then further we see that there is a redefining moment of counterculture that is happening, which brings in the talk about masculinity.

They also talk about conservative fashion, leading to debates on issues like gun rights, violent subcultures and LGBTQ inclusion in mainstream societies. Now, We know and it could be a point to question why LGBTQ plus and why not LGBTQIA plus. So since the book that was written is quite written before, before the inclusion of IA, we see that there is IA missing.

And therefore, their inclusion in the mainstream society in America garnered a lot of attention. Lastly, these conflicts highlight the ongoing tension between countercultural values and conservative norms. shaping societal debates and policies since the 1970s. So we saw an emergence. We looked into the historical aspects of counterculture in America.

And then we went across all the movements that happened in America, which also got integrated into the mainstream American culture. And with that, it makes us to conclude that these countercultural values and the conservative norms are very different. And at some point, they help in shaping the belief systems, the values of the society at large and also culture to an extent.