

Is Commodification, Extinction or an Evolution to Folklores?

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ABSTRACT

In the era of Globalization, every aspect of human life is being influenced by technology which creates a gap between local sub-cultures following traditions and popular culture, that is backed by technologies. Most of the researchers believed that the influence of technology would slowly degrade and eventually endanger many of the local cultures existing in the middle and margin of the society. Nevertheless, is this true? The answer for the question is discussed in this paper. This paper focuses on analyzing how Indian folklore through the influence of technology and through Commodification opens the door for preserving and transmission of folklore across the generations or for the extinction.

Keywords: Commodification, Evolution, Extinction, Folklore

INTRODUCTION

Traditional Knowledge refers to the knowledge that is held by all members of the society, which can also be called as Folklore. Folklore is the common property of the people. The concept of folklore emerged in Europe in mid-nineteenth century. William John Thoms first introduced the term folklore in 1846. He then, defined Folklore as what people traditionally do and what they traditionally say by the word of mouth or orally. It means the manners, observances, superstition, ballads, proverbs and so forth, which are used in olden times (Emrich, 1946).

Folklore is considered initially as the traditional knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation-through

informal oral transmission. They are said to be the product of a particular group of people called folk with unique folk characters (Kongas, 1963).

Since the rise of globalisation and urbanisation, folklorists feared that the folklore and its materials would be lost forever as the characteristics of folk society is already lost and the spread of globalisation ensured in the increased of cultural homogenization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Globalisation is a complex phenomenon and involves economic integration; the transfer of policies across borders; the transmission of knowledge; cultural stability; the reproduction, relations and discourses of power; it is a global process, a concept, a revolution and an establishment of the global market free from socio-political control (Mir et al. 2014). It encompasses many things and run across multitude of disciplines and cultures. Globalisation can be classified based on the sphere it affects. They are economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions (Rifai, 2013). However, the three dimensions may seem as separate entities, in truth they are interwoven with each other and among them; social and cultural sphere has the major role (Hebron & Stack, 2013).

Socio-cultural sphere was gradually evolving under the influence of technology and their extent and volume of transmission rose through tourism and immigration, exchange of ideas through mediums like radio, TV, newspaper and internet (De-

Soysa & Vadlamannati, 2011). Apart from the dissemination of knowledge, commodifications of tradition knowledge systems also helps in both dissemination of culture to different places and contribute to the development of society.

Commodification is the process whereby an object becomes a commodity, with a price of its own, and is put on the market. The first studies of commodification were done by sociologist, Karl Marx who viewed commodification as expropriating the means of production from much of the population in order to create a supply of labourers who labor in order to purchase, and consumers unable to produce their direct use (Ziolkowski, 2004). Commodification of cultural knowledge that is by converting the indigenous or traditional knowledge into the object of trade increases the exposure to the main stream norms by spreading styles, ideas and values into wider society; attract monetary value which contribute to the economic development of the society and can transmit the knowledge down the generations through the process of digitalization.

This paper tries to understand the transmission of traditional knowledge through the influence of technology and by the process of Commodification and analyse the impact on the preservation of traditional knowledge by focusing on the Indian cultural knowledge in various aspects such as values, morals, medicinal knowledge, folk games, music, dances, myths, tales and other cultural aspects. Through this paper, it can be learnt that whether the technology and merchandization have positive or negative impact on the local cultures and how it can be preserved from being engendered by cultural homogenization.

MATERIALS & METHODS

In this paper the mix of descriptive and explorative research methodology is followed as it focuses on the aspects of the traditional knowledge especially in Indian-Tamilian culture that are commoditized to have market value and then describe the

reason for behind them. The study derives the data from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary information is gained through the methods of observation especially non-participant observation, survey from readers, parents and through personal experience. The secondary data are collected from books, comics and journals.

RESULT

The traditional knowledge of Indian – Tamilian culture are utilised in the various sectors for the development of country and by the private sector companies to improvise and commercialize their products.

Folk Medicinal Knowledge in Advertisement

Folk medicinal knowledge refers to the information pertaining to the usage of plants for their medicinal properties. Nowadays with the increase in the exposure to the money economy and allopathic medicinal system, the knowledge is being endangered and as practiced only in smaller percent in the rural areas. In the context of advertising, the manufacturers of various products like bathing soap bars, washing bar, and other products pertaining to healthcare system are making use of this traditional knowledge to attract the consumers. By advertising that their products have the medicinal essence of Turmeric, Lemon, Nneem, Tulsi, and Hibiscus they are attracting the people in order to increase their product demand. Even though people knew that these are rich in medicinal value, these are not used because it takes time for processing these ingredients, which consumes time. Examples: Brands focusing on Skin and Hair care like Himalaya, Head & Shoulders, Mamaearth, Indulekha, Biotique, VLCC, Patanjali; In case of soaps, Brands like Dettol, Hamam, Cinthol, Mysore Sandal, Santoor, Medimix, Chandrika are some of the brands which utilises traditional knowledge in their products.

In today's modern world, people are running towards money making and have few leisure time. So they are in need of easily accessible product without taking much of time. This thought of people makes them easy prey for those manufacturers to make use of the folklore knowledge for his own gain.

Folklore and Tourism

India is known for its diverse cultural heritage and traditions. India has a vast expense of traditional architecture such as temples, mandaps, Pillars, etc. which have a never-ending history behind them. In order to expand the economy of the nation, our traditional and cultural heritage sites are opened for the outsiders to visit and gather knowledge. Though it is done for monetary reasons, it gives an opportunity to the people to protect their traditions and the materials, which reflect their traditions to prevent them extinction. Examples: Brihadeeswara Temple, Thanjavur known for its construction and its materials; Meenakshi Teple, Madurai is known for its 'Gopuram Towers' and Golden Lotus Pond; Sri Laxmi Narayan Golden Temple, Vellore known for its outstanding carvings, artworks and its construction and Sculptures of Mahabalipuram are some of the well-known places that has deep historic value and also attractive tourist places in Tamil Nadu.

Performing Arts in Mass Media

Every state in India has its own set of traditional music, dance and songs, which are being performed by particular community people. With the increase in the globalisation and technological advancement, the folk songs, music and dance are being commercialised and used for monetary gains. At present, the Indian Film Industry is making use of various traditional music instruments, songs and dances in their creations to attract the people. Examples: Movies like Sivappathigaram, Tharai Thappatti, Sarvam Thalam Mayam have placed some emphasis on the traditional music and music

instruments. This kind of commodification helps in retaining the performing folk arts and helps in rapid spread to a large mass of people.

Folk Literature in Printing and Graphic World

Folk literature refers to the stories, myths, legends, tales, proverbs and poems that are orally transmitted at first and then converted to modified forms. The preservation of folk literature in their material form is very hard because of the decomposing nature of palm leafs and the paper. With the invention of printing, the folk literature is first converted into novels, stories books for children such as Jataka Tales, Vikam and Vedal, Akbar and Biral, Tenali Raman, Panchatantra tales, Ramayana and Mahabharata for kids. Later they are published in the interactive format known as comics. It was and still is being published by Amar chitra katha Twinkle, Champak, Vanavil, etc. until now. With the advancement of technology, in printing world the graphic designing was introduced leading to the production of graphic novels. At present, the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata and many other stories and legends are being modified into science fiction stories in the printing world so as to keep up with the changing cultural environment Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy novel, Christopher C. Doyle's The Alexander's quest and Vineet Bajpai's Harappa are the suitable examples.

Apart from this, the tales, proverbs and legends are digitalised in to a story-telling format in the Cartoons, Web comics, and drama forms. Examples of folk literature in cartoons are the show of Krishna in POGO TV channel and Roll No21 in Cartoon Network. There are also different you tube videos available in YouTube for kids on Hindu Mythologies, Tales of Ramyana, Athichudi, Jataka and Panchatantra stories. These videos, cartoons and webcomics attract many children and are used as medium for educating our traditions to them. These videos are also passed down as Digital folklore materials.

DISCUSSION

From the results of the study, varied professionals in varied sectors use the traditional knowledge that is passed down from the generation to generation. Though the commodification of folklore gave an impression that the folk materials are forced to plunge into the extinction with loss in value and importance, it is not the case. Technology can be used for the perpetuation and the preservation of the folklore and its materials. Folklore has the ability to adjust to the changing pattern of society. This character of folklore is made use for the commodification of folklore. Even though many folklorists fear that tradition will be lost in urban areas, we have to accept the words of Herman Bausinger (1990) that tradition in the urban environment does not disintegrate but expands.

CONCLUSION

Through this study, it can be proven that folklore and traditional knowledge of sub-cultures are that are in the verge of endangerment and extinction can be revived through technology by attaching commercial value and raising their worth. Though the influence of technology has negative effects on the minor sub-cultures through bandwagon effect, it can be minimalised and can be transmitted to others for a long time by converting their in digital form for easy access and long-term preservation instead of archivals. It will prevent them from being lost in the cultural homogenization and will open a new door for folklore in the digitalised era.

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