

Culture and Governance: A study of Zonal Cultural Centres in India

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Culture has multiple meanings. For traditionalists like Anand Coomar Swamy, Gopi Nath Kaviraj, etc it is the exploration of the self. (**Coomarswamy: 2006**), For others, it is the representation of everyday life, the culture of common people, which reflect desires, dreams, sense of belonging, vehicle in-depth community's memories, time and space. For many years culture was perceived as homogeneous, coherent, stable and bounded cultural whole. But, during the past two decades, culture as reevaluated by theorists and anthropologists as a site of difference, multiplicity, contest, negotiation, and also a domain of power and authority discourse. (**Human Development Report, 2005: 88**).

Due to close associations with everyday socio-economic life of the people and communities we have multiple cultures, not one culture with a capital 'C'. Earlier, culture was managed by the communities themselves. In fact, culture was never considered to be the subject of management and governance in modern terms. It was growing and developing with the life of people, interacting with various kinds of influences. Popular sects and religious institutions certainly tried to regulate few aspects of the cultural life in Indian society. The new notions around cultures, which are linked with development, managing identity and cultural freedom in multicultural society like India, extends the meaning of culture and made it more as state oriented idea, notion and site. (**Rao and Walton: 2004:9**)

In fact, colonial governance by their methods transforming culture as means as well as subject of governance tried to change the meaning of culture in Indian society. During colonial time, there were various attempts to collect, document, survey, count and analyse cultures of various communities, to govern them, their collective psyche and identities. Here culture came in the orbit of state governance. (**Crook William: 1968, Grierson, G: 1975**). Cultures were targeted 'to know' to rule their colonised *praza*. The methods and strategies being developed during colonial governance of culture, that – to collect, document and study those who were rare (*anuplabdh* for colonial *sahebs*), amazing and influential. The line of politics, which emerges from the folklore collections and cultural surveys by colonial sahibs was based on documentation, study and re-presenting' the unique', 'the useful' and 'influential'. (Narayan.2001:55). That means they paid attention to those cultural forms or the cultures of the communities, which appeared unique for colonial outsider masters, those who look useful to understand the societies that was the target of their total governance, and those who were related with the communities, powerful, dominant, visible. The meaning of visible here is – those who are socially and economically powerful and able to provide the legitimacy of the act of governance of colonial power and also of those subaltern communities who were emerged as unlawful martial communities and became visible for colonial governance.

In post colonial India, the similar line of cultural governance is continued by Indian state. Here we are not going to indulge in the debate whether culture should be governed or not, but to understand the policies and programmes of cultural institutions as a part of Indian democratic state and try to analyse distribution of

preference and opportunities created by states, while dealing various communities, as communities of cultures and with cultures.

Objectives

The project aims to understand how post-colonial state conceives its population and where culture comes in it? How state creates its categories, while framing its cultural policies? The study of democratic distribution of resources, opportunities and supports by the government cultural institutions to the communities especially Dalit is one of our agendas. As we know most of the Dalit communities are very rich in terms of their cultural resources and creative urge but according to our primary understanding they are not even culturally visible for the Indian state in terms providing opportunities and supports.

Research Questions:

1. How Indian state formulates its preference to support cultures of the communities? How do they create its units, categories to govern and administer cultural support?
2. Meanings of opportunities and supports in cultural administration.
3. Dalit as cultural communities: Exploring Dalit cultural forms.
4. Indian state, cultural support and Dalits.
5. Market as one of the determinants of cultural preference of democratic state.
6. Forms of cultures and state preferences: More visual art and less literature.

Scopes and Field:

I propose to evaluate Zonal Cultural Centres (ZCCs) in India, which were formed after 1985, as a project of expediting the process of nation building at grassroots level launched by Rajiv Gandhi .We have seven ZCCs all over the India, which covers all the states and regions that come under Indian territory. These are as follows: EZCC, Kolkatta, NCZCC, Allahabad, NEZC, Dimapur, NZCC, Patiala, SCZCC, Nagpur, SZCC, Thanjaur and WZCC, Udaipur.

We will select at least two ZCC for study, evaluation and collection to understand our research questions. To compare, we will also study National Sahitya Academy, Delhi and National Lalit Kala Academy.

Output:

An Article around 7000 words will be submitted to the CRG under this study.

Methods:

1. Collecting all governments' reports for the formations of these bodies, financial reports, budget and grant pattern
2. Collecting reports about their programmes and policies for cultural support
3. Annual Reports, detail of events, newspaper reports
4. Reports of review committees formed by ministries and government(s)
5. Long interviews of directors and programme officers of these institutions

Time Plan:

At least one year is proposed for the study. In this year, we will focus on like fieldwork, data collection, library and archive visits, various sittings for the long interviews and writing the report.

References

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