

A walk down 'pop' lane

How does one define culture, and essentially 'pop culture'? Never mind the academicians as there is no true consensus.

For our own use, we may loosely term it simply as the set of practices, beliefs, and objects that are considered ubiquitous in our lives at any given point of time. While one may never be able to

To put things into present perspectives before we take a walk down memory lane, one may wish to address 'pop culture' of this generation. It is safe to say that social media is now the mover and shaker. Cinemas have taken a backseat; Netflix is in, but television is out, except for the Game of Thrones, or... maybe. Even if we claim that Netflix is

platter on Instagram, even before they reach our palate.

Yet, not all things have gone 'viral' on our local scene. Pinterest enjoys little following, and we never did really catch the Twitter fever! So, whether it's a meme that puts a Mughal court symbolising 'genjam at Dhanmondi,' or the nonsensical sketches of our political rhetoric — everything now trends primarily on Facebook.

'Oporadhi' may mean nothing to us. Even if it did, we would just shrug it off as a simple guilty pleasure. Like the Ananta Jalil flicks, we coin this 'low culture,' despite the mass appeal. Yet, you and I are one of the million generous viewers contributing to the song's phenomenal success, or Ananta's antics.

Oporadhi 2, a rebuttal with little to no sexist undertones, and contrary to the original, despite having some brilliant wordplay, still hovers around the 13000000 mark. Not viral enough, but a point to be noted.

Could this be 'high culture'? That too, however, is a term often taken as derogatory.

So what is 'pop culture'? Is it something that lies in the middle of the two? At least that is how culture theorists consider it — the middle of high and low, an intangible space within the spectrum where the boundaries blur through convergence.

THE OLD WAYS

Our parents seem stuck in the golden '70s. They share fond memories, much to our embarrassment, of the Uttam-Suchitra flicks, or the Razzak-Kobori rom-coms. To people somewhat older, the memories of the ever-so-elegant Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra, and Richard Burton as Mark Antony at the Madhumita Cinema Hall are much cherished.

Bobita is a name we never hear our fathers bring up on the dinner table. GG, MM, or BB are codes that you hear your fathers and their friends sometimes talk about when they meet. Little do we know that they are simple acronyms, and all the hush-hush becomes crystal clear — the luminous Greta Garbo; the blonde bombshell that was Marilyn Monroe; the epitome of a sex symbol, Brigitte Bardot!

Our parents and their siblings desperately try to hide their renegade youth, but all the photos in the family album give away their guile. Aunts in sassy shalwar kameez; their overwhelming charm oozing out of the monochrome photos, still leaving us bedazzled with their sharp sense of fashion.

We wish we could extend compliments to the men. The shirts, body hugging to say the least and about two sizes short of what would now be considered a good Cats Eye fit; the pants, skinny (for lack of a better word); the hair, a classic faux pas in mimicking an Afro, or the even more ridiculous mullet.

Of course our grandparents did not approve...that did not stop anything, really.

EL PHENOMENON Schrödinger's Cat?

How does a spiritual story tangled with protagonists fighting a battle in the final frontier make for a trendsetter, a pop culture that is as alive today as it was when Star Wars opened in theatres for the first time? For too many of our readers, that is something we can relate to, but one does need a moment to swallow when a hypothetical cat of a bizarre theory in physics makes way to pop stardom and feline legend.

Erwin Schrödinger, the Austrian physicist — not a name one would associate with pop culture. Here is one fellow

whose theories keep a thousand academicians sleepless for endless nights and wannabe science aficionados arguing. Bankers, stockbrokers, journalists and accountants (once aspiring scientists) love our indulgence conversations over a cup of tea on a rainy afternoon — after all, like our Friends List, the proverbial cat is multidisciplinary: quantum physics; literature; philosophy...memes in social media!

Children listen to folktales, the youth ponder the existential crisis of Schrödinger's and other people's cats. Erwin may have been lost to the annals of popular history, but his cat lives on! Tardar Sauce, a.k.a. the Grumpy Cat, she is now a celebrity, much to the boon of social media. She is a symbol that ridicules all the negativities and portrays cynical images that we find ourselves weaved into in our social fabric. To sum it up, here are two cats even the most ardent dog lovers have learned to love.

GENIUSES VS GENIUSES

Why single out Schrödinger, when we have other great-minds-turned-pop icons — Einstein for one? His oft repeated equation brought down the sale of yet another 'pop' genius's magnum opus. The story goes that while penning the best-seller (which also tops as one of the least read books in history) 'A Brief History of Time,' the editor was frank enough to suggest Stephen Hawking that for every equation he puts in the tome, the prospective buyers simply halve.

The rest is history (pun intended), but one cannot just help shudder at the thought of him using more than one! "THERE IS NO SECRET INGREDIENT" The debate over Elvis vs. Cliff still continues among the baby boomers of our family;

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say whether pop culture defines our behaviour, or if it is the other way round, it is undeniable that whatever is 'pop' is now significant to mould our attitude towards society, and life in general. It is taken that 'pop' is regional and bound by time, but theorists now suggest that as we move forward, the fault lines are no longer a social reality.

'in,' that info too has perhaps reached you via Facebook or an ingenious boost to promote every gimmick.

Facebook rules; Instagram is up there. There was a time when societies said grace over meals, now those solemn moments have been hijacked by our urge to make best use of our iPhones or Galaxys, and putting the contents of our

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