

Course 5(MFCI-005):

Project Manual for PGDFCS

Structure

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1.0 Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- know what is quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis;
- have a list of probable themes and activities that you can carry out as part of your project work; and
- get an overview of the entire diploma course through the FAQs.

1.1. Introduction

As part of your coursework, you are required to undertake a project on a chosen theme in folklore and culture of India. The objective of the project manual is to equip you with all the necessary methodological tools that one needs when carrying out such project work. The project work needs to be submitted in the form of a project report or dissertation of five thousand words. If the report is based on the survey methods (which will be discussed in section 1.3) then the details of the sampling and quantification methods being used needs to be provided along with the findings of the survey. If the research method followed is qualitative analysis (i.e. content analysis of already collected or available data), then proper references and bibliography needs to be provided as part of the findings or analysis. Please follow the different sections of the manual carefully. They will guide you in how to choose topic of research as well as how to conduct the research through a given research methodology. If you choose to, you can also make your dissertation based on multiple research method rather than being based on only one research method.

1.2 Quantitative and qualitative research methodology

Let us begin with what is research methodology. If we break the word research, we arrive at two conjoined words, viz. re – search. In other words, research is not repeating what is already discovered or stated. It is either inventing or discovering something that has not been known earlier or re-investigating an earlier finding and providing new meanings to its understanding. In any research study, you will find a section termed ‘review of literature’. In the section, the researcher is expected highlight the major finding or positions that already exists in that field or topic.

Subsequently, the researcher has to show how his/her investigation would further advance or add to the existing knowledge in that particular field or on the topic.

Another section that we will come across in any research report is that of research methodology. In this section, the researcher elaborates on what is the research method that he/she will follow to investigate the topic of research. Research methodology can be broadly divided into quantitative and qualitative research. What is quantitative research? Quantitative research is that research in which the collection and processing of data as well as the expression of the results or findings of the processed data is made in mathematical form. Thus, researches that use mathematical tools in data collection and processing and present the findings in formats of mathematical science are quantitative research. Then what are these mathematical tools? In social sciences, the mathematical tools of data collection are generally questionnaires, interview schedules and focussed group discussions (FGDs). They are mathematical because each of the tools of data collection is based on a mathematical assumption that the source from which data will be collected and the data that will be eventually collected can be numerically represented. For example, suppose there is a study to find out how many people in a given area welcome the birth of a girl or a boy in their families. In a quantitative method, the total population of the area (which would be available in the Census) would be taken as the universe, and it will be assumed that ten per cent of the total population will be representative of the total population (which will be taken as the sample size). In other words, it will be assumed that the opinion of the ten per cent of the total population can be taken as representative of the total population.

However, we need to remember that what constitutes the sample size of a given universe is dynamic. It can differ in terms of caste, religion, class, region, geography, nature of employment, etc. Further, what constitutes the universe and what constitutes the sample size will differ according to the nature of research. For example, if the group of people being studied is a very small number (such as mental universe of psychiatric patients in a single hospital), then there may be no need for deriving a sample size because the universe is too small to allow that derivation. In such cases, all the patients will have to be counted as data.

Once the sample size is determined, and data is collected, the next stage will be data processing. In quantitative method, data processing also takes place through mathematical techniques. Using different formulae, classification of the data will be made, and then tabulated based on the classification. Once the tables are ready, the researcher will compare and collate the tables and arrive at the conclusions. These conclusions too are generally presented in mathematical formats such as percentages, sets, diagrams, tables and graphs.

There are two other quantitative methods of research, viz. interviews and focussed group discussion. In recent times, interviews based researches have become popular. In such research method, the notional assumption of universe – sample relation is not used. On the contrary, each subject of research (i.e. each person being interviewed) is considered a universe in itself. Therefore, returning to our earlier example of mental universe of psychiatric patients in a hospital, in interview based research, the object of study may not be to find out the general trend of their psychological universe; rather it will be what is the psychological universe of each patient in that hospital. Interview based research is generally based on very in-depth interview schedule. The schedule

contains as many questions as possible to uncover or probe the subject to his/her deepest psychological level. An interview schedule may have as many as forty to fifty questions too. The interview can span from several hours to several days as well. The time span depends upon the satisfaction of the researcher that all possible information has been collected from the subject. We should remember that both questionnaire method of data collection and interview method of data collection have their respective research utility. Whereas the former is generally used for research through which we need to know a trend, the latter research method is used to know the complexities and subtleties of the human mind. Nevertheless, even in the latter method, once all the interviews are over, the combined data is again compared and collated to arrive at the final conclusions.

Focussed group discussion (FGD) is another method of quantitative data collection. A group of people are provided with a topic of discussion and the opinions of all the people are recorded. Later, the transcripts or notes are analysed and then classified into units of opinion. What should be the number of people in an FGD group? There are no specific rules on the optimum size of an FGD group. However, there is an underlying assumption that it should be representative as a sample of the total population which the FGD tries to address. FGD as a tool of data collection is generally used when the demographic universe is small. For example, FGD is used for investigating a student group in a school or of employees in an office. FGD has been very successfully used in organisational research, i.e. studying the social universe of a specific organisation such as schools, corporations etc.

In most cases nowadays, quantitative research involves a combination of research methodologies in data collection. In other words, questionnaires, interview schedules and FGDs are used in various combinations to extract or derive as much differential information as possible to arrive at any systematic interpretation of the subjects of research. One of the underlying principles of quantitative research is to delineate what is the general trend and what are the possible exceptions to the trend. Therefore, it is assumed that only through a combination of various quantitative methods that both the rule and the exception can be scientifically arrived at and explained.

Let us now focus on how qualitative research differs from the above discussed quantitative research. Qualitative research is based on the assumption that social science research cannot be mathematically conceptualised and explained to arrive at the fact. It is assumed that the human universe when seen in terms of thoughts and practices is too diverse and complex to be conceptualised and explained mathematically. One of the major critiques of the quantitative method of research, viz. sampling of the universe, therefore has been that how does one arrive at a rational figure of representative sample of the universe? It is pointed out that the sample size is only an assumption and that there is nothing scientific to that assumption. Since the sample size is only an assumption, therefore, the entire edifice of the finding is weak. If the sample size is not scientific (because it cannot be scientific), then the entire classification of data as well as the classification of results based on the former could very well be misleading. Further, it is also pointed out that through the quantitative methods, one can only collect the opinions of subjects. However, the opinions per se cannot be assumed as the fact that exists at the ground level. Let us return once again to the earlier example of how the birth of boy child and girl child is received in a community. Suppose we complete the collection of the sample data. But what we

have collected in that sample data is a number of perceptions or opinions of people regarding the birth of a boy or a girl in their families. However, to prove that those opinions are valid, i.e. they are actually practiced too, one would require other kinds of data such as Census reports, reports of local medical centres, available information of and from nurses and midwives who are instrumental during childbirth, enrolment and drop out of girls and boys from schools and colleges, possible reports of sex determinations, etc. It is only when the opinions/perceptions of the people are compared with the data gathered from other sources that the veracity of the opinions/perceptions can be proved. Without this procedure, the findings based on the collected opinions could be of limited use. In other words, if the object of research is to arrive at the fact of how a community receives the birth of a boy or a girl, it can only be arrived at through a qualitative study of various reports, data, oral accounts, history and background of the community and the collected and classified opinions.

In the recent years, one of the strongest critiques of quantitative research has come from the area of culture studies. For example, can culture and traditions be studied through mathematical models? If we take the field of folklore studies, the point can be very well explained. In the early decades of the 20th century, folklore studies tried to understand folklore, such as tales and myths, through assumptions that were based on mathematical notions. For example, Alexander Propp in his studies on Russian folktales emphasised that all folktales can be studied as a combination or arrangements of some definite markers. Different folktales are nothing but arrangements and re-arrangements of these given markers. In other words, when studying folktales, one needs to identify these given or fixed numbers of markers in the folktales. This approach came to be called formalism. However, by the last quarter of the 20th century, such an approach to understand and explain folklore came to be critiqued. It was pointed out that folklore cannot be studied in terms of arrangements of some definite number of constants/markers. It came to be pointed out that meaning of folklore can depend upon various factors like historical context, social group or community, space, nature of performance of folklore, text or content of folklore, etc. The markers that were argued as constant, therefore, now came to be considered as variables. It was not the arrangement of constants but those of variables that give meaning to a particular piece of folklore. Since the components are now considered as variables, therefore, one can assume n number of variables. As a result, folklore studies moved significantly away from assumptions of mathematics to assumptions that are qualitative in nature. In other words, the primary focus now came to be centred on what is the specific nature or quality of the data under discussion rather than converting that data into numerical figures.

Qualitative research has generally been inclusive of various kinds of sources. For example, it can include archival texts (i.e. old texts or manuscripts that are preserved in archives and museums), oral traditions (such as folktales, myths, proverbs, etc), interviews (to record memory), diaries and other notes that people leave behind, or reading texts against the grain (i.e. trying to uncover the hidden code of a text rather than assuming the apparent point made in it as true). You must have noticed that in all these procedures, the basic thrust is not to quantify the data under consideration, i.e. not to assume that it is only when the data is converted or expressed in numerical figures that they can be taken as scientific or rational. For example, to know the condition of women workers in early industrialising India, one can rely on the numerous diaries that the women workers had left behind to comprehend and explain

their experience. The mere birth, health, education or death figures may not be able to convey their experience of industrialisation as well as their diaries. The researcher who would focus on these diaries may not try to quantify the experiences, such as A number of women workers stated X number of experiences, etc. Rather, he/she would try to focus on each case of experience as unique and representative in itself.

This brings us to a discussion on integrated research models. Contemporary researches have increasingly tried to assimilate the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods of research. For example, the methods of FGD or case studies have become part of qualitative research as well. It is assumed that a report or any other written text or oral source per se may not sufficiently bring out the depth that the data otherwise contain. Therefore, FGD or case study method is used to probe further the data and uncover what possibly lies hidden behind the apparent screen of meaning in the data. Similarly, an FGD or case study alone may not sufficiently uncover the depth of the data in hand. Therefore, the context of the data (from whom and where it is collected), the other kinds of related data that exists in the field for comparison, past researches on that line and their findings, experiences of the people who are the subject of data collection etc may become crucial indicators for the research besides the opinions collected through FGD and/or case study. Most disciplines in social sciences in the contemporary period, such as social anthropology, sociology, history, political science, folklore studies, linguistics and so on generally premise their researches on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Whereas in the above mentioned disciplines, the general tilt is towards qualitative method, in disciplines like economics or geography, it is towards quantitative methods. But generally, components of the two methods are noticeable in their overall research models. The balance also depends upon the objective of study.

1.3 Themes and activities

You will find below a list of topics based on which you can make one research project. The project work can be quantitative research as well as qualitative research, or a combination of both. Your project report/dissertation should be of five thousand words. **You will choose only one topic from the following list.** The theme and the topic number given under the theme should be mentioned in the cover of your project report/dissertation.

Theme One: Conceptual Perspectives

Topics that can be taken up for research

- (a) Folklore Studies: Its Uniqueness and Relevance in India;
- (b) Folklore Studies and Inter-disciplinary Approach;
- (c) Palace Paradigm;
- (d) Sanskritization;
- (e) Archiving and Ethics; and
- (f) Language Death and Language Preservation.

Theme Two: Tradition, Identity and Cultural Production

Topics that can be taken up for research

- (a) A case study of process of identity formation in history;
- (b) A case study of tribe and identity formation in India;
- (c) A case study of role of politics in identity formation in India in recent times;
- (d) A case study of commodification of culture in India; and
- (e) A case study of copyright and commodification of culture in India.

Theme Three: Cultural and Societal Transformation

Topics that can be taken up for research

- (a) A case study analysis of any textual performance in India;
- (b) A case study analysis of translation and politics of language in India;
- (c) A case study analysis of how we can classify a particular folklore into a genre;
- (d) A case study analysis of any folk music in India and its role in the community it belongs to; and
- (e) A case study analysis of any katha tradition in India.

Theme Four: Tribe, Identity Culture and Lore

Topics that can be taken up for research

- (a) A case study analysis of any origin myth of an Indian tribe;
- (b) Identify a nomadic tribe and analyse its strategies of survival;
- (c) Identify a tribe and explain its relation to electoral politics in India;
- (d) Identify a region and compare the different economic strategies of two different tribes from the region; and
- (e) Identify any tribe from north east India and discuss its Human Development Index.

1.4 Frequently asked questions

Q.1 Tell us something about what we understand by folklore.

Answer: Folklore, if one has to say in very simple language, is the study of folk culture. But then the question comes, what is folk culture? I think this is where the major problems and debates on what is folklore and folk culture has been. There was a time in European academia when culture that was not written or literary and that was not classical was taken as folk culture. Therefore, it included various folktales and myths. Some of the pioneering works on folklore, for example, those of the Grimm brothers in Germany or Anderson in the case of Scandinavia, both from the 19th century, were primarily on folktales and myths that prevailed in their respective societies or regions. The other point to note here is that study of folk culture is essentially a phenomenon of the modern times. I think, with industrialization and modernization, and the rapid spread of the print culture, there was an attempt in Europe to discover cultural elements and practices that still remained close to the

common people. Maybe we can also say that which stayed close to tradition. Thus, emerged the study of folk culture in Europe. Now coming to your question on folklore, we can already see that folklore at that time in Europe generally included oral culture. The culture of writing was excluded from the study of folklore.

Now this takes us to an important debate with regard to folklore in ancient civilizations like India. As we know, India has a continuous history of several millennia. Throughout this period, there have been extensive exchanges of cultural thoughts and practices between written and oral traditions. In fact, there have been such exchanges in all areas of culture. Therefore, when it comes to India, folklore cannot exclude written culture and similarly study of literature cannot exclude the oral traditions. Folklore in the case of India, then, would include both written and oral traditions, though certainly the focus would remain on the oral.

Q. 2 How does one introduce what is folklore or folk literature to students in India?

Answer: Folklore study in India can only be an interdisciplinary study of culture. As you have already said, unlike in Europe, study of folklore in India has to take into account not only oral but also the written traditions. I would add further that the strict distinction that was developed between classical and folk culture in Europe could be difficult to apply in India. For instance, the classical genre of thumri in Hindustani classical music in India is often traced to folk music in the Gangetic area. Or to give another common example, is it possible to demarcate devotional music or literature into either classical or folk categories in India? Sufi music was an interaction between both classical and folk. In literature, even if we have poets like Ghalib who would be placed in classical Urdu literature, we also have poets like Mir Taki Mir whose poetry was part of popular culture. I can give another example of how demarcation between classical or elite culture and popular culture could be difficult in India. We know that the Ramayana tradition is very old in the subcontinent. Now can we place the Ramayana tradition in only classical or elite culture or popular culture? We cannot. The katha tradition, which is so integral to Ramayana practices in the subcontinent, could be both popular as well elite, depending upon the context of its practice.

Q. 3 Is context an important determinant in knowing what is folklore or folk literature and what is not?

Answer: The answer can be both yes and no. There have been different parameters to distinguish folklore. Context is one of them. To continue with the example of the Ramayana tradition, the Ramayana was first written in Assamese by Madhab Kandali in the 14th century for the court. But the language used was popular and not that of the court. In fact, the difference between court and popular language markers were generally absent in the case of Assamese language in the medieval period. Therefore, Sankardeva, the Vaishnava saint-reformer of the 17th century, could use the same Ramayana for his popular social movement of Vaishnavism. Sankardeva also performed the Ramayana on stage, called Ankia Nats. Though, these plays had script, much of its performance was also oral, i.e. improvised at the time of performance. This was not only applicable to the text but also the music that accompanied the performance. Though generally based on Hindustani classical, the compositions were also improvised at the time of performance, borrowing from popular traditions of music. Now in the case of the above example, can we demarcate the Ramayana

tradition into either classical or popular? The demarcation, as is evident, depends upon its context, viz. whether it is performed in the court or among the common people.

Let me also say a few things about the whole debate on genre classification of folklore in this case. If we begin with what is genre, we will say that it is category of classification based upon certain common denominators. Thoughts or practices that share these common denominators would be classified into one genre. But in folklore, that becomes a problem. For example, in Joyce Flueckiger's recent study of folk songs of Chattisgarh, she has shown how the Bhojali songs, when sung in the Raipur area, bear different meaning from when it is being sung in parts of Chattisgarh closer to Orissa. The difference is in terms of content, and also in terms of performance. Therefore, she asks the question, how we classify the same Bhojali songs: according to gender because they are sung by women, or according to region, or according to community, or according to text or for that matter, in terms of nature of performance. The basic issue that she raises is what criteria to follow when we classify folklore into genres. This point of genre classification holds special significance in ancient civilizations like India. Because there has been extensive sharing of culture across space and over time throughout the subcontinent, it can become very difficult to classify folklore into water tight categories. We will find that our epic traditions are common to almost the entire subcontinent. But their meanings differ from place to place and from community to community. This is not to add that their meanings can also differ from time to time. For example, when the Assamese Ramayana of Madhab Kandali moved from the court in the 14th century to among the common people under Vaishnava movement, though the content of the text continued to be same, its meaning underwent a major change. Thus, in the case of India, we should be very careful when we try classifying folklore or folk traditions.

Q.4 Is it true that folklore study in India has to be interdisciplinary in nature?

Answer: Absolutely. If genre classification is a problem, as we have seen, then its study also has to be interdisciplinary. Folkloristic alone cannot be the way forward for us here. We cannot explain folk culture unless we study time, i.e. history, unless we study social origins, i.e. historical anthropology, unless we study social practices, i.e. a sociological focus, unless we study musical traditions of a community, i.e. ethnomusicology, unless we study the written culture, i.e. literature, or unless we study the traditions of performance. But folk practices also change; it has happened even in the course of the modern period in India. Moreover, folklore has also emerged as an identity marker in the modern period. Therefore, we have to study politics as well to explain folk culture. So you see, study of folklore in India has to be interdisciplinary right from the very beginning.

Q. 5. One of the contentious issues in culture studies have been the ideas of 'high' and 'popular' cultures. What is its application in the context of folklore study in India?

Answer: Thank you for raising this question. I think the concept of 'high' or elite culture and 'low' or popular culture has little relevance in the case of India. This distinction is once again a European concept, especially post Renaissance. Greco-Roman culture came to be considered 'high' culture and other cultures would be compared with it to determine its status. It was also based on the belief that classical

culture is more evolved and 'superior' to folk culture. Till the 19th century, study of 'high' art received much of academic attention in the West. But since the 20th century, academia turned its attention to the study of common people's culture to understand and explain society. It was believed that social upheavals or revolutions in the modern period could be explained more in terms of popular culture than elite culture. But for very long, these studies never seriously challenged the very concept of 'high' and 'low' culture. They only studied which culture could have greater explanatory quality of society and historical context.

In the case of India, I think the concept of 'high' and 'low' culture is rather problematic. We have already seen in the case of Ramayana traditions how cultural practices transcend social and political boundaries. In fact, throughout India, our epic traditions stand testimony to the fact that cultural thoughts or practices transcend boundaries of any kind, whether that be of region, or community, or time. They carry different meaning depending upon the criteria of classification chosen. I am not saying that a holistic meaning of a tradition is therefore not possible at all. It is possible to say that the story of Ramayana is a saga of the victory of good over evil, and that it exhibits how the entire South Asia share certain common cultural facets. But this commonality should not blur the fact that the interpretation of the epic differs in different situations.

The point that I think we should be raising here is what methodology helps us to understand a culture better. After all, concepts like 'high' or 'low' culture are nothing but methodological tools to explain culture and society. In the case of India, we should abandon such methodological approach in favour of a general approach of culture and then studying a particular tradition according to its place of origin, its places of practice, communities associated with its practices, the dimension of gender, the relation that the tradition share with other traditions, changes that it has undergone over time or across space or its oral – written relations. I believe it is such an approach that can lend itself better to explaining culture in general and folklore in particular in the context of India. Such an approach also facilitates overcoming the politics of culture. For example, culture has become a marker of identity in the contemporary times. Therefore, designating cultures as 'high' or 'low' could be politically problematic. Thus, abandoning the approach may also help culture studies from the pitfalls of identity politics to an extent.

Q.6. What is Palace Paradigm and Sanskritization?

Answer. They are two concepts used in culture studies in India to explain the very point of 'high' and 'low' culture. One is Jawaharlal Handoo's concept of Palace Paradigm. Handoo argued that in India, we should focus on folk culture more than literary culture because literary culture cannot reflect anything of common life while folk culture, and thereby folklore, can. He argued that the literary culture of India has been from the ancient times been dominated by the elites of society, which he termed as the palace. Therefore, the entire body of writing that we have in India from ancient times only deals with the society of the elites. On the contrary, folklore as a body of information or of knowledge is of the common people. It reflects the society at the popular level. Therefore, rather than the various celebrated texts, whether they be in Sanskrit, Persian or the various other languages of India, it is the folk tales, the myths, folk songs and performances that should be studied with greater application. I think to

an extent, the argument is right. We do find that much of the written literature that emerged in India historically was initiated by or was written for the court, i.e. the ruling elite. However, as we have already discussed earlier, this is only one side of the picture. There is an enormous fact of extensive exchanges that have gone into the various kinds of traditions that have emerged in the subcontinent. The critique of the concept of 'high' and 'low' culture also can be applied in the case of Handoo's palace paradigm. Handoo articulates the same concept in a different way. But I do think that the concept of palace paradigm has made an important academic contribution in India, viz. it has forcefully brought folklore to the forefront of culture studies. I would like to note here that the timing of Handoo's concept (1990s) is also significant. In a way, we can say that his concept encapsulates in a term the point that even Subaltern Studies (which began in the 1980s) was trying to make in the social sciences. A fundamental aspect of Subaltern Studies was that it sought to uncover the popular mind at its purest possible state of being. Thus, it focused on oral collections than any written archival collections as the source to study society or community. It assumed that since common people was generally distant from written culture written sources cannot be taken as valid means of exposure to their society. But we have already seen that this methodological assumption may be problematic in the case of India wherein traditions overlap upon each other and exchanges from each other.

The other concept that has been often used is that of Sanskritization, propounded by social anthropologist MN Srinivas in the 1950s. He argued that society in India can be seen as hierarchies and those in the lower hierarchy assume traditions of those high above in the hierarchy to legitimize their upward social mobility. In other words, those who are not an upper caste becomes an upper caste, it will assume the culture and traditions of the upper caste into which it has graduated into to legitimize their new found caste status. What Srinivas was trying to say was that upper caste traditions, especially brahmanical traditions, were the benchmark for the other castes below in the caste hierarchy. It was not enough that someone from the lower caste became powerful politically. It was also important that that the political significance is legitimized through assuming traditions of the upper caste. I think just like Handoo's concept of palace paradigm, this concept too has some application to explaining culture in India. But that application should not be overemphasized. Today, we know that the rigidity of caste classification is to a large extent a result of colonial times, especially the Census. We know that the term 'jati' was loose in its meaning. The strict distinctions that we see today between demarcations of caste and tribe and community are largely a colonial phenomenon. Moreover, to assume that the caste populations that figured since the colonial censuses have been so even earlier would be incorrect. Numerous communities became caste or tribe categories in the process of census practices. Therefore, without denying that Sanskritisation may have limited application, we need to emphasize that it cannot explain cultural transformations in terms of region or community or political necessities as variegated as is to be found in India.

Q. 7 Do we need to use more of culture as development than culture as evolution model in our culture studies?

Answer. Yes. Culture as evolution today is rather a Darwinian way of looking at things, which may be put of place in the face of contemporary researches. For example, in our evolutionary model, we have this sequence of society moving from

tribe to state society and then becoming a nation. Similarly, from hunting gathering stage, one moves to settled agriculture and then through feudalism into capitalist era. Formation of culture and changes that it undergoes is seen as an integral part of that social process. But how do we verify that trajectory for places outside Europe? Does it apply on the New World, i.e. North America and Australia? It clearly does not. Can we associate 'tribe' with primitiveness as the model does? No we cannot. For example, in terms of human development index, the tribes of north east India show better indices than many non-tribe populations in the rest of India. Then we can ask whether settled agriculture is always the norm? Once again, we can find in India the huge populations that the British termed nomadic tribes who do not practice settled agriculture. Interestingly, the British termed them tribe and not caste because they thought caste and settled agriculture went together. These communities continue to be termed as 'tribe' constitutionally in post colonial India as well. Therefore, we can also see here how Darwinian assumptions have shaped our Constitution as well, which is otherwise very liberal.

In the light of the above evidences, I think studying culture as development rather than evolution is more appropriate. When we do that, we study culture as a historical process. We do not assume that all kinds of cultures have a same starting point, i.e. hunting gathering stage. We do not assume thus because that assumption may have little relevance or significance to the object of study. Culture and traditions are specific historical phenomena. They come into existence in given contexts and change when contexts change. They also play a major role in the change of such contexts. I think this approach is more scientific. It can explain both the past and the present. And in the case of India, it very importantly helps us get from much of the colonial discourse that played a role in the study of Indian culture.

Q. 8 What is folk forms as protest?

Answer. In India, the festival of Holi is one of the best examples of folk forms as protest. This is also something that Jawaharlal Handoo in his discussion on palace paradigm has discussed in detail. He basically considers Holi as the occasion in which the traditional hierarchies of caste can be broken and even those from the lower caste can make fun of and participate in the festival on terms equal to that of the upper castes. Vulgar humour is part of this inversion of power relations in the festival. It is an occasion of breaking of social hierarchies which is sanctioned in the tradition itself. However, Handoo argues that these few occasions that exists as sites of inversion of power relations act as pressure valves in society. For example, the festival of Holi does not change the power relations among castes for the rest of the year. But it gives an occasion when the lower castes can feel empowered in this momentary inversion of power. It is this illusion of inversion of power relation that, besides other factors, helps preserve the power relation in the society. Handoo was however not the pioneer in this interpretation of folk forms as sites or acts of protest. It was Michael Bakhtin from Russia who popularized this concept in the 1960s with reference to carnivals. He gave numerous examples from Europe wherein folk culture, through such modes of culture, helped preserve the power relation in society. He noted, therefore, that such folk forms of protest are not aimed at breaking social hierarchies. Rather they aim at preserving the very hierarchies that these folk forms give the illusion of breaking.

Q. 9 How do we see the whole issue of preservation of folk forms?

Answer. Preservation of folk culture may appear a simple proposition. But in reality it has many dimensions. Firstly, it has to deal with the basic question what we are preserving and why. Do we need to preserve a 'regressive' culture or tradition or practice? Then we have the question that what is 'regressive' cultural practice or tradition and who decides whether or not it is regressive? It may be very difficult to arrive at any consensus over these questions. Secondly, with regard to preservation of folk culture, we have the problem of how we preserve it. Do we preserve it through its commodification and thereby ensure its viability? Do we preserve it as 'dying culture' in an archive or museum? And if we do that, with what motive one is trying to preserve it as 'dying culture'. Thirdly, we see that culture or tradition has emerged as one of the most important identity markers in the modern times. We see that all over India. In that case, what role does the community play in relationship between politics and culture preservation? Does culture preservation and politics of marginal/marginalized culture become synonymous? These are some of the questions that we have to consider when we discuss preservation of folk culture.

Q. 10. What of the legal issues in this matter?

Answer: Thank you for the point. Yes, legal dimension in folk culture preservation is another issue. The question of copyright is fundamentally connected to the concept of property. Therefore, the issue come up that is culture property and thereby can we have copyrights over culture? But then we also have to deal with the question that if culture is allowed to be commercialized, i.e. its capitalist use, then shouldn't its copyright also be allowed? This leads one to a further problem. Who should have the copyright over culture? Should it be the national government or the community? This is of utmost importance in a country like India. In India, the distinction between state and community is constitutionally acknowledged. This is very different from the West where the state only deals with individuals, i.e. citizens. In India, the state deals at two levels, at the level of individual, i.e. citizens, and also at the level of community. Thus, when it comes to copyright over culture, the dilemma always remain that it rests with state or community. Thus, we see that both legally and ethically, the problem of copyright can be a very difficult tangle.