

Anime and K-Pop Acculturation: A Marxist Critique of East Asian Popular Culture among Kerala's Youth

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Anime and K-Pop Acculturation: A Marxist Critique of East Asian Popular Culture among Kerala's Youth** is a bona fide record of sincere work done by MARIA JOHNSON, Register Number: 220011028695, Bharata Mata College, under my supervision and guidance and that no part of this thesis has been presented for the award of any degree, diploma, title, or recognition of this or any other university.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in English language” (Williams *Keywords* 87). As this quote from Raymond Williams, the renowned cultural theorist suggests, culture is an exceedingly complex term that functions as an umbrella, encompassing a diverse array of phenomena, concepts, and ideologies. Culture could be considered as the way of living, a term that binds together the general behaviours, ideologies, thoughts, beliefs, values, actions, practices, and artifacts of a group or society. In this manner, cultural analysis becomes an integral part of understanding and studying a society, contributing to several other aspects of human beings. Analysing the popular culture of a society becomes crucial in comprehending their recent trends and living choices. Cultural theorist, John Fiske describes popular culture as an “active process of generating and circulating meanings within a social system” (23). It encompasses collective beliefs, practices and artistic output prevalent in a society at a particular point in time. Popular culture can mould societal perceptions and, conversely is moulded by them. It reflects what is deemed relevant and what is not. Essentially it reflects and influences public preferences in areas like entertainment, literature, art, and fashion. This project aims to explore the ongoing surge of east Asian popular culture, particularly Japanese anime and Korean pop music, among the youth of Kerala, through the theoretical framework established by the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory.

Cultural Studies emerged in England due to a crisis in the humanities, with fields like sociology lacking a subjective and political edge. It was pioneered by theoreticians like Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and Edward P. Thompson as

they laid the foundation for further developments in this field. Stuart Hall contributed through debates on culture and other aspects of it. Their discussion led to establishment of the Centre for Cultural Studies, founded by Hoggart and Hall at Birmingham, despite hostility from the university's English and Sociology departments. Early cultural theoreticians like Hoggart and Williams were influenced by F.R Leavis who promoted an elitist view of culture. His work impacted their works even when their views drastically differed from his conservative conventions. Despite such influences, cultural studies scholars faced prejudicial attitudes from mainstream academia resulting in distancing themselves from traditional humanities departments. In the beginning, there was no dedicated body of knowledge for this field. Hence it required several seminars and research on cultural issues that range from political to everyday issues. Their theories and practical works were built on ideas borrowed from sociology, humanities and anthropology. They were influenced by works of the Frankfurt School and European scholars like Benjamin and Gramsci. It propelled them to engage actively with the society.

Cultural Studies is highly political in nature due to being pioneered by Marxist theoreticians. It is an interdisciplinary field that explores and studies contemporary culture, giving equal importance to its historical and social roots; hence, the research scope of this field is boundless. As mentioned earlier culture is a complex term likewise cultural studies are something more complex. Raymond Williams analyses culture as a complex organization of the whole of society and the general to particular elements of the whole is considered with equal importance. Hence, he states that the theory of culture should be based on the relationship between these elements. Williams describes culture as ordinary and a whole way of life: "... define the theory of culture as the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life. The

analysis of culture is the attempt to discover the nature of the organization which is the complex of these relationships” (“Analysis” 37).

Stuart Hall, in his work *The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of Humanities* (1990) called cultural studies in its initial state as a “conjunctural practice” (11). Hall further adds that “cultural studies is not one thing; it has never been one thing”, thereby pointing out the dynamic nature of cultural studies (11). He describes cultural studies as a field that emerged due to the breakup of “traditional culture”, the rise of a new consumer society and the impact of mass media in post-war Britain:

For me, cultural studies really begins with the debate about the nature of social and cultural change in postwar Britain. An attempt to address the manifest break-up of traditional culture, especially traditional class cultures, it set about registering the impact of the new forms of affluence and consumer society on the very hierarchical and pyramidal structure of British society. Trying to come to terms with the fluidity and the undermining impact of the mass media and of an emerging mass society on this old European class society, it registered the cultural impact of the long-delayed entry of the United Kingdom into the modern world (12).

Hall’s analysis on culture emphasised on power relations within a society and how marginal or minority groups protect their cultural spaces against the dominant group. E.P Thompson in his seminal work *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), added voices of the unheard and the ordinary, defocusing the history from the high culture by shedding light on the previously undocumented remains of the cultures of the working class.

High culture is a concept that is often associated with terms like education, elite, and sophistication. It stands for music, art, art forms and literature that is often considered as refined or classic and is associated with the elite or the upper-class strata of the society. Popular culture or mass culture rose as a contrasting culture to the high culture of the dominant classes. While high culture is more exclusive popular culture is vaster and accepting. Predominantly driven by masses popular culture is characterised by consumerism and influence of mass media and communications, where the consumers in a way have a choice to succumb to its commercial artificiality or reject it. It is also not completely untouched by the dominant classes, to a certain extent they can impose their standards and ideology upon the marginal or subordinate classes, but at the same time the latter get the liberty to accept or oppose it. It stands distinct from and yet intertwined with the everyday culture of an ordinary person. Everyday culture could be delineated as the experience of living or 'the whole way of life' as suggested by Raymond Williams, which in fact is emotional, psychological and historical. It is the culture of the ordinary that affects the contemporary economic, social and political aspects of life. Hence popular culture becomes an ally of everyday culture. People tend to follow and influence what is popular. Mass accessibility and appeal is a major factor of popular culture thereby the ordinary person becomes an integral part of it.

Borrowing from what folklorist Henry Glassie say about popular culture, it varies maximally through time and minimally through space, denoting the its transitional nature. It is not constant it changes with time, say a particular character from a movie gets popular what it denotes may remain constant at across space at a particular time but its meaning might change over time as other aspects gets added to it say video games and other entities that got inspired from that character. Mass media

and technological developments fuels globalization, shrinking the world and bringing people closer. It promotes exchange of culture especially what is considered popular. The fraction of society that is more proximal to such media and technological advances is the youth. They become a deciding factor for what is popular. It also becomes a major element that helps in constructing their identity. It in a certain way holds an upper hand in the manner they decipher the world. It influences their meaning-making process, political understanding, and even the language they use. Youth culture specifically relates to social norms and trends shared by children, teens, and young adults that set them apart from the adults in society. They get easily influenced by music, film, TV shows, video games, social media, animation, and so on. The people, items, or ideologies that they admire from those influences end up in their rooms as posters, figurines, and video games. It affects them semantically, adding new words to their vocabularies and creating lingua francas.

In the contemporary times, the east Asian popular culture has found a wide acceptance globally with Japanese anime, Korean pop music, Korean movies and series, and Chinese series being the front runners of it. East Asian popular media to a great extent has made their position in the western media with their artists being invited, nominated and awarded in the west's globally renowned award shows and functions. The west in this scenario mainly delineates to the United States of America. American pop culture is more globally wide spread and most of the other communities tend to copy or get inspired by it. United States' upper hand in a global notion of popular culture allows it to a certain extent shape and determine which forms of popular media from various regions could be promoted on a worldwide scale. Hence, when other regional popular cultures get accepted and embraced by the

American market, it gains a foothold in the global consumer market. Analysis of anime and K-Pop would be the principal focus of the paper.

Anime could be broadly comprehended as the animation produced in Japan. In Japan the term anime is a shortened version of the English word animation and uses it to describe all works of animation. Japanese animes are detail-oriented with almost a film-like making. It is characterized by its unique art style. And a great importance is given to the plot which often employs a complex narrative line. Anime gained momentum globally in the late twentieth century and since then has only gained more popularity. It has gained huge fandoms and communities, and the advances in technology including social media platforms have only brought them together. What once was a niche has gradually transformed into the mainstream.

Korean pop music or shortened as K-pop is another regional pop culture that has been gaining attention globally in the recent years. Although it is a term used to describe the Korean music industry ranging a vast genre of music, it is often associated with the country's pop music, entertainment industry and idol culture. A majority of what is generally considered K-pop draws its inspiration from western pop music and hip-hop. Thus, a majority of K-Pop music incorporates rap into it. K-pop singers range from solo artists to bands, with bands enjoying more popularity. They are famously referred to as idols and have done their fair share in the world celebrity culture. K- pop also have created large fandom bases and communities. Both anime and K-pop have semantically influenced their consumers with their nuanced terms and usages that go beyond traditional boundaries.

Kerala has a long history of welcoming people and cultures from different places and regions across the globe, gaining the quality of easily adapting and

contributing to other cultures. The whiff of anime and K-pop has reached the state, with predominantly youth being its consumers. In the recent years, there has been a surge of youths in Kerala showing an interest in both anime and K-pop. This interest got evolved gradually and started to break its niche during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also a keen demand for the secondary products inspired by them.

The aim of this project is to analyse and understand the acculturation process of anime and K-pop among the youths of Kerala through the Marxist-inclined theories of Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer that are critical of popular culture. Both belong to the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, a school of thought that was highly critical of 20th century mass culture, technology, and capitalism. There are five chapters in this project. First is the introductory chapter that lays the foundational knowledge of cultural studies and sets the background and context of the project. The second chapter would be dealing with a literature review, further delving into the theories of Adorno and Horkheimer, with more emphasis on their concept of cultural industry, and incorporating other cultural theorists like Walter Benjamin. It also includes relevant research materials about the influence of east Asian popular culture. Chapter three tries to trace the cultural footprints made by anime and K-pop in India and Kerala. Fourth chapter will deal with the application of the previously introduced theoretical knowledge in analysing the engagement of anime and K-pop particularly among the youths of Kerala. The research methodology of the project involves analysis of cultural texts and data collection from youth in the form of surveys. The final chapter would provide a conclusion for the project, summarizing and providing key insights and inferences made from it.

Chapter 2

Exploring the Popular: Culture Industry and the Rising Influence of East Asian

Popular Culture

Anime and K-pop have found wide popularity around the world in recent years. They have also become areas of interest for many researchers dealing with society and culture. While keeping their native cultural influences they have also accommodated and incorporated the pop culture of the West, predominantly of the United States thereby gaining an audience across the globe. In addition to its unique style, K-pop is heavily influenced by Western musical genres, mainly hip-hop, rap, R&B, and indie. Japanese anime on the other hand has its own original stories and settings it also has a lot of works based on European folklore and other stories, western characters, and in non-Japanese settings. As both fields of entertainment do not limit their possibilities, they create various options that can be catered to according to the choices of their consumers. At the same time, it is crucial to note that K-pop and anime have become a tool for mass production. Beyond its array of choices and options, both K-pop and anime are run by a capitalist system. With their global popularity, they have also contributed to the standardization and commercialization of culture. Hence, this nature of both K-pop and anime could be studied and understood through the analysis based on the concept of Culture Industry proposed by Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer belonging to the Frankfurt School of Criticism.

Adorno and Horkheimer in their work argue that mass production has led to a decline in creativity and has hindered the production of true art. Their line of reasoning suggests that the such a cultural industry that is based on mass production,

prying on commercialization and standardization, actually deceives masses, manipulates and control them. This leads to a homogenization of cultural products, seizing the individual's thoughts and actions by conforming them to the capitalistic interest of economic and technological power structures.

Culture industry, broadly referring to mass appeal entertainment sources like films, radios, and magazines, according to Adorno and Horkheimer creates a uniform system. Thus, leading to a homogenized cultural experience. In such a scenario, the products are primarily similar and it thereby hinders diversity and creativity. They lack true substance. Leaning towards their Marxist tendencies the theorists emphasize the role of power structures in dictating cultural production. These power structures defined by their economic footing make use of technological advancements in fulfilling their intentions (Adorno and Horkheimer 33). The dominant class in a society thus maintain its dominance and already existing social hierarchies.

Suppression of critical consciousness is another argument made by them. The culture industry undeniably is highly influential and capable of directing individual thoughts and behaviours. By suppressing individual consciousness through manipulation, they effectively gain control over the masses warding off any form of resistance (33). With a “circle of manipulation and retroactive need,” it creates and perpetuates consumer desires (33).

Moreover, it creates a pretence of diversity, options, and choices, creating a “false identity of the general and the particular”, behind that pretence it enforces, uniformity and conformity seizing genuine individuality in mass culture (32). They critiqued mass culture as “identical” and “artificial”. Products of mass culture lack authentic expression, they are reduced to the status of commodities, “achievement of

standardization and mass production” (32). Implies how the culture industry is driven by quantity over quality.

The hindering effect on critical thinking and imagination of individuals is made apparent in their work through the example of film and how it prevents its audience from having their imagination or reflection. Passive conformity is thus created among people. Standardization and mass production lead to imitations lacking genuine style and authenticity: “In the culture industry this imitation finally becomes absolute. Having ceased to be anything but style, it reveals the latter’s secret: obedience to the social hierarchy” (38).

According to their study, the culture industry promises pleasure and satisfaction, which in reality are mere illusions and are not delivered. Besides diminishing the traces of individuality, it also creates a “pseudo individuality” (40). The intellectual content of cultural products that are mass-produced is noted as corrupted emphasised by the “untruth” in it (40). Its commercial motives sabotage its artistic quality: “The deception is not that the culture industry supplies amusement but that it ruins the fun by allowing business considerations to involve it in the ideological clichés of a culture in the process of self-liquidation” (40). The “mechanical reproduction of beauty” in culture industry denies art from true admiration and genuine aesthetic appreciation (38).

A deeper understanding of how mechanical reproduction compromises art and artistic integrity could be achieved through the analyses made by another Frankfurt School scholar, Walter Benjamin. In his critique of production of art in the modern day, Benjamin elucidates the complex relationship between art, technology, and mass culture. He notices that in an era where art becomes mere products of mechanical

reproduction, where manual production gradually loses its value, reproducibility and mass accessibility get prioritized. It affects the way art is consumed and also creates an impact on society. Benjamin articulates this by stating that the transformation of art happened in such a way that changed masses' reactions from a “reactionary attitude” to a “progressive reaction” (Benjamin 234).

Benjamin, also like Adorno and Horkheimer stressed that art lost its originality in the era of technological advancement. He argued that mechanical reproduction deprived art of its “aura”, a unique presence in space and time (238). The mechanical era has commodified art, creating an abundance of it, hence its consumption has become democratizing and easily accessible compared to the previous ages. There the “cult value” of a product gets overshadowed or entirely replaced by “exhibition value”, access and spectacle take over uniqueness and authenticity (240).

The mechanical interaction of film actors and the audience is used to exemplify the alteration of the masses' reaction to art. The “reactionary” attitude is contemplative while the “progressive” reaction is highly direct, and it has a social significance:

The progressive reaction is characterized by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert. Such fusion is of great social significance. The greater the decrease in the social significance of an art form, the sharper the distinction between criticism and enjoyment by the public. The conventional is uncritically enjoyed, and the truly new is criticized with aversion (234).

Hence public has an affinity towards the familiar, while the unconventional and the experimental is faced with criticism and resistance. Purpose and perception of

art have also transformed with the advent of mechanical reproduction, to this point he laid down his observations on film, which gives an in-depth analysis of human behaviours and society. Benjamin also classifies the audience of the contemporary art generated with mechanical reproduction as “distracted” (239). Such an audience that lacks sustained attention immensely affects the perception of art.

Adorno in another work regarding culture industry, reconsiders the notion of culture industry and adds some other key observations. He argued that the culture industry blurs the border between high and low art, the distinction before was very clear but with standardization and commercialization the factors that made them unique and kept them apart collapsed. It jeopardized their integrity and seriousness. Adorno notes that the performativity of high art, how it reaches the masses and satisfies the expected commercial needs, has diminished its seriousness (Adorno and Rabinbach 12). It also, Adorno observes, diminishes the inherent rebellious and resistant nature of low art, by controlling and sanitizing it (12). Low art, one could analyse as a counter-movement to high art, most of the time low art is used to define the art produced by the voiceless. The people who had been suppressed, based on their race, region, gender, class, or cast, those who were alienated from the high art, expressed themselves through what is defined as low art. Low culture publics show a degree of hostility towards and reject the traditional notion of ‘culture’ that is often equated with the culture of the dominant group (Gans, 115). They emphasis more on substance and individual experiences:

Aesthetic standards of low culture stress substance, form being totally subservient, and there is no explicit concern with abstract ideas or even with fictional forms of contemporary social problems and issues. . . . Low culture emphasizes morality, but limits itself to familial and individual problems and

[the] values, which apply to such problems. Low culture is content to depict traditional working class values winning out over the temptation to give into conflicting impulses and behaviour patterns (115,116).

Adorno's observation about the integration of high and low culture suggests that with the onset of mass production, the products of both cultures get reduced to commodities made solely for mass consumption.

He also mentions that consumers of culture industry are not completely unaware about their situation, that they are getting manipulated by the industry. Adorno states that people voluntarily "falling for the swindle", "desire a deception" that is "transparent" to them for "fleeting gratification" (16). As per Adorno the culture industry also creates a psychological dependency among its consumers. It caters to their "ego-weakness", either by promoting or exploiting it (18). It develops the consumers' consciousness retrogressively almost to a child-like state, simple and easy to take control of. Such an observation suggests the lack of independent judgement and critical thinking among individuals.

Such observations could also be used in analysing the globalization and resultant commodification of anime and K-pop. Both anime and K-pop, have been a topic of interest for many researchers who work on researchers dealing with East Asian popular culture. Both have gained global success that could comparatively surpass other entertainment media originating from the East Asian region. Notably, some of the research based on them is concerned with both of its popularity, cultural diffusion, audience, and commodification.

Over the past twenty years, the "mobility of capital, people, and goods" across the globe, alongside advances in digital communication technologies, transnational

markets, and cultural industries has made an impact in growing media and cultural globalization in non-western regions, driving different ways in which popular culture could circulate (Iwabuchi et al. 1). Though globalization and Americanisation of East Asian popular culture have catalysed its growth, research scholars dealing with the culture industry of East Asia have argued and traced out other historical factors too. The emergence of East Asian popular culture is overdetermined by modernization, colonization, cultural globalization, capitalism, and neoliberalism (3). For instance, the Korean wave infamously known as *Hallyu*, the spread of South Korean popular culture, also grew due to other factors like “complex structural interactions between and within countries in the region”, like “the U.S. military and cultural presence during the Cold War, cultural policies made by the South Korean government, and a network of U.S.-influenced creators and entrepreneurs” (3). K-pop is one of the most prominent components of the Korean wave.

One of the major reasons why the demographic of anime and K-pop are youth could be delineated with a study that was based on the growing affinity of American youth towards anime, the research claimed that the youths of countries like America gravitate towards anime as it possesses a 'strangeness of the setting, story lines, and characters' (Alison 16). It is strange and unfamiliar, but at the same time, Japan exists for real, probing them to learn and know more about its culture. ““Japan” signifies something important here, but the signifier is shifting: a marker of phantasm and difference yet one anchored in a reality of sorts— a country Americans can study and visit. So, fantasy and realism are both at work here...” (16).

Globalization have offered anime and K-pop internet, a major characteristic of the contemporary era that has significantly contributed to the growth of their popularity.

K-pop, for instance, gets culturally diffused through various social media platforms and channels. Video-sharing sites like YouTube facilitate its spread. Thus, creating a space for the fans to engage with K-pop content, share their experience, and find people with similar interests in a platform supporting decentralized and participatory diffusion.

However, the role of video-sharing sites such as YouTube has been largely neglected. We argue that YouTube fosters a unique ecosystem for cultural diffusion... YouTube-based diffusion encompasses a communication network in which users are connected by exchanging ideas. It also entails a network of users associated by shared tastes and interests (Xu et al. 45).

Thus, such platforms contribute to the expansion of K-pop beyond Asia by making a pathway for fans to discover, consume, and share K-pop content. Thus, platforms like YouTube, have allowed K-pop to enter India.

Japan has gained a reputation “as an artistic country that produces cool animations, games and characters”, among a larger number of groups across the world (Iwabuchi, “Contra-flows”, 63). Anime, primarily targeted at children, was introduced as cartoon programs on Indian television over the past few decades, the popularity increased due to the “gap between demand and supply” at the time and as the already existing mythology and folklore-based Indian animations were found to be repetitive (Jaggi 10).

The reviewed literature provides a comprehensive theoretical overview of the culture industry, its various characteristics, and key findings related to the rising popularity of East Asian popular culture. This groundwork will support the paper’s development, offering a thorough context for subsequent analysis and discussion.

Chapter 3

Cultural Dissemination of East Asia Through Anime and K-pop: A Focus on India and Kerala

Walter Benjamin, in his article, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, critiques that the mechanical reproduction of art not only compromises its authenticity but also puts its historical significance at risk (221). Such a phenomenon in an Indian context could be exemplified through the evolution of the depiction of the mythical figure Rama through time, from a *maryadapurushotama* to that of a bow-nocking warrior. Though the early form of the *Ramakatha* existed from the early 6th century B.C.E., it gained immense popularity in the 11th century C.E. with the growing influence of the *Bhakti* movement (Bulke 154). The topic of discussion here is not any Sanskrit works, but rather an anime based on the plot of Ramayana which was released in 1992. Though the soap opera of Ramanad Sagar had been broadcast four years earlier through Doordarshan, *Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama* by Koichi Sasaki had a growing popularity among children. One may refer to the observation by the German philosopher Schelling on how myths live through their proponents across millennia and how they build a nation (qtd.in Shirer 102).

Anime in India thus could be traced to television channels broadcasting cartoons from Japan making the Indian audience familiar with the art style. Anime art styles are different from other animation styles primarily in their treatment of motion, while other animations focus on the movement of the characters anime tends to pay more attention to character design than motion. Anime is often 2D animations, with an exclusively styled depiction of human anatomy, and though it may differ across

various works at its basic level the style remains the same. *Jungle Book: The Adventures of Mowgli* (1989) animation series on Doordarshan was a progeny of Japanese animation, and also contributed in familiarizing the unique animation style among the Indian audience. The story was inspired by Rudyard Kipling's collection of stories; The Jungle Book therefore was set in a familiar terrain attracting many children from all over the country. The original Japanese series dubbed in Hindi was instantly a hit and it featured an original Hindi track which was written by the veteran lyricist Gulzar. The song "Jungle Jungle Baat Chali Hai" remains one of the iconic songs that came out of children's cartoons in India. Then with the onset of private television channels other Japanese animations entered the Indian market, some notable ones include cartoon series like Pokemon, Dragon Ball Z, and Beyblade. A further penetration of anime among Indian youth came from the channel Animax, which broadcasted many of the world-renowned anime (Jaggi 10). The popularity gradually grew paving the way for anime conventions, and a demand for Japanese cuisine particularly Japanese restaurants in India naming dishes after anime characters or making dishes based on anime series, and the popularity of anime-based merchandise. While analyzing inter-cultural references and representations, India gets a fair number of depictions and renditions in Japanese anime. Many popular anime draw inspiration from Indian myths, notably Indira and Asura from the anime series *Naruto*; both names could be traced to Hindu and Buddhist traditions where Indra is the god of thunder while the Asuras could be broadly understood as demigods, antigods, or demons (Hitokage Production). Another anime series with a cultural-historical reference to India that ought to be mentioned is the 1993 series *Konpeki no Kantai*, a counternarrative to the post-1930 world, it provides an alternate history of World War II where Japan is shown to have an upper hand. Mahatma Gandhi under

the name “Suavi Gandhi” appears as a cameo in its twentieth episode, where they distinctly commend him and his ideologies (“A Shock and the Remaining”).

K-pop entered India as a part of *Hallyu*, or the Korean Wave, the promotion of South Korean popular culture across the globe. In India, *Hallyu* happened in two phases, first through an economic wave where Korean companies namely Samsung, Hyundai, and LG established their market and became household names, and second was the cultural wave where Indian audiences got introduced to Korean dramas (Kshetrimayum and Chanu). K-dramas like *Emperor of the Sea* and *A Jewel in the Palace* were aired through Doordarshan in 2006, they became the first K-dramas ever to be introduced to Indian audiences through cable television. An affinity towards Korean pop culture in India was mainly seen among the North-east Indians, who may have found some proximity with the Korean culture rather than the mainstream Indian pop culture that stereotyped or neglected them. This surge was first seen in Manipur. In 2000, an underground revolutionary organization in Manipur banned Hindi films and television channels except for Doordarshan, allowing films from South Korea and Thailand to enter the state (Kshetrimayum and Chanu). Such dissemination of Korean culture further allowed other Korean cultural products to enter the Indian entertainment market. K-drama and K-pop have now found a wider audience in India and have gone beyond the North-east. India’s exposure to Western media might have also resulted in the popularity of K-pop, with famous solo artists and bands performing predominantly in talk shows and music award shows. K-pop also acquired its presence in Indian cable television through various channels, notably Vh1 India’s K-pop segment *K-popp’d* and Zoom TV’s exclusive interview series with popular K-pop artists. Undoubtedly, online content-sharing sites like YouTube have also played a significant role in thickening K-pop’s presence in India. With well-known Indian

celebrities expressing their love for K-pop and collaborating with K-pop artist, and K-pop idols acknowledging and thanking their Indian fanbases, a symbiotic relationship between Korean and Indian popular culture could be observed.

K-pop and anime have also made a significant contribution in creating a positive perception about East Asia. The archaic racial terminology of the Mongoloid race, plausibly due to the colonial influence, has been sustained in India. People of China, East Asia, Indo-China, and Central Asia have been perceived as a single homogenous group with a common culture, language, and lifestyle. A similar aspect can be seen in the case of the North Indian perception of all South Indians as Madrasi. Kerala, due to the trans-oceanic contacts with various cultures from ancient times, has been familiar with the Chinese. Words like *Cheenavala* and *Cheenachatti*, where 'cheena' is a Malayalam prefix for China, indicating those objects' place of birth, are still prevalent in common day usages. Whether one is from North-East India, China, or Japan, they are referred to as *Chainakkaran*, that is, 'a person from China. There remained a stereotypical perception of East Asians among the common folks of the state. Many of the cultures from East Asia get confused with that of China, though words like *samurai* and *ninja* are known among the people, many remained oblivious of its Japanese culture. Though the more educated classes might have maintained a distinction between the various East Asian Cultures with regards to history, geography and economy and Korean films were popular among the film critics, a drastic effect was felt upon the society with the popularisation of the Korean Dramas. K-dramas were freely available through various online platforms, such a free access and the content quality attracted the young audiences in Kerala. It would have given the youth of Kerala a clearer view on the heterogeneity of the East Asian cultures. The popularity of Korean arthouse films among Malayali film lovers could be analysed

through the Malayalam movie, *Oru Vadakkan Selfie* (2015) where the protagonist Umesh an amateur filmmaker and an engineering student decides to create a short film. His initial thought about creating the short film was to copy the stories from the Korean films he had. Such intercultural references indicate its quality and the dissemination of Korean culture industry products in Kerala. Followers of Korean dramas may have gradually known about the K-pop industry, as these dramas sometimes had plots portraying the lives of K-pop idols and also the presence of idol-turned-actors in the drama might have ignited the curiosity of its viewers compelling them to search more on K-pop.

As a genre, anime would have been known to Malayali children through cartoons from various television channels like Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, and Hungama. One of the earliest Malayalam cartoon channels Kochu TV had also had multiple programmes in the genre, *Heidi, Girl of the Alps*, an anime based on the Swiss author Johanna Spyr's story collection Heidi, was aired under the name Lilly in the channel. It is not a far stretch to say that the state has a fair amount of anime enthusiasts. "Anime and manga enthusiasts are dubbing content into Malayalam to make it accessible to more people" (Priya). The anime fan communities in Kerala conduct meet-ups and come up with initiatives and ideas to boost the popularity and easier availability of anime across the state. Anime comes in Japanese, and many watch it through subtitles or English dub, so initiatives like dubbing it into Malayalam help in widening the demography of anime consumers in the state. The demography of anime in Kerala remains to be young adults in metropolitan cities with a good grasp of English. Anime with its unique style has inspired artists. "Kochi-based illustrator and designer Treasa Maria draws popular anime characters in Kerala-specific cultural settings in her fan artworks" (V.N). The article about the artist in *The*

Hindu cited her work works to be an amalgamation of popular anime characters in Kerala's cultural settings. Some of the artist's notable works include “Naruto and his gang of ninjas from Konoha village” celebrating Onam and “the famous magical spirit Totoro, from *My Neighbour Totoro* (1985), in a mundu holding a palm-leaf umbrella and titled it *Totoronam*” (V.N). Such instances exemplify a blend of cultures made possible by the import of culture industry products. The popularity enamoured with fan support has created various anime-themed events across Kerala, and several active Kerala based online communities support and promote anime.

K-pop also has contributed a great deal in allowing intercultural interactions in Kerala, a Malayali girl even became a K-pop idol. Aria a member of the K-pop girl group X:IN, hails from Kerala. Before being an idol, she was a child actress who used to work in Malayalam movies. In the Zoom TV interview segment Meet the Sensation with Sakshma Srivastav, the idol revealed that her interest in K-pop and her eventual choice to be an idol came from her admiration for South Korean boyband BTS (“Meet the Sensation” 00:04:25). Hence the popularity of K-pop has influenced many, making them curious about Korean culture with many wishing to visit the country at least once or like Aria to choose careers that require them to settle there. Rahul Gandhi, a prominent Indian politician, wrote an X post that provides more evidence of Kerala’s youths’ affinity for K-pop and its impact on them. The post was made during his visit to Kerala as part of the Bharath Jodo Yatra march. The video, dated September 20, 2022, and captioned “A delightful chat with these incredible girls who are Kerala's BTS Army!”, featured three girls who talked about their dreams and ambitions to the politician (Gandhi). They aimed to become nurses in South Korea, a goal inspired by their collective interest in K-pop, particularly BTS. The popular Malayalam sitcom *Uppum Mulakum*, a TV show about a mother, father, and their five

children, had an episode where the eldest son of the family sang two BTS songs that attracted the attention of other family members (“#EP1145” 00:08:56 - 00:10:34). These instances point out the impact of K-pop on Kerala’s youth culture. Many of the young adults in Kerala, due to globalization and advancements in technology, are exposed to other cultures across the globe. Korean culture, predominantly through Korean films, dramas, and pop music, has disseminated to a certain extent into Kerala’s popular culture, as exemplified through the previously mentioned instances. The popularity of BTS has made them enter the curriculums of the region’s universities. University of Calicut included BTS in one of the papers meant for their BA English Language and Literature Honour programme, in 2024. Their song ‘Spring Day’ came under Module 1 of the paper titled Print and Digital Narratives in the course (University of Calicut 507). Consequently, K-pop has gradually interjected into the mass and everyday culture of Kerala, though its presence is not of high margin, it has made a small yet significant mark in the region.

With this established knowledge of the accounts of cultural disseminations and interjections made by anime and K-pop in Kerala, the next chapter tries to inspect and further scrutinize the culture industry of both East Asian cultural imports. The analysis will focus on the Frankfurt School’s Marxist criticism of the culture industry, primarily analysing the nature of its consumers and the commodification aspect. The methodology of data analysis was employed to facilitate a more detailed examination of the matter. Data was collected through a survey, distributed via Google Forms, which gathered responses from 51 people who identified themselves as anime and K-pop enthusiasts.

Chapter 4

The Market Economy of K-Pop and Anime in Kerala

This chapter focuses on a comprehensive analysis, employing a mixed methodology approach. The first section presents a detailed examination of data collected through a survey conducted for this research. The subsequent section involves an analysis of cultural texts, enabling further exploration of the topic. The survey was conducted with the intention of understanding how popular anime and K-pop are in Kerala. Particularly, among the youth the survey tried to decipher those East Asian cultural commodities' influence on them.

The goal was to find out the impact anime and K-pop have on their consumers, and to analyse the nature of their consumption and popularity. Also, the extent to which those consumers have been involved in the commodification facet of both industries, whether anime and K-pop caused perception changes and were proponents of a culture shift among its consumers.

The mode adopted was online, the survey was circulated and its data was collected through Google Form. It had 23 questions. They were a combination of both anime and K-pop related questions. The survey was circulated among anime and K-pop enthusiasts, mostly students. A total of 51 responses were received.

Four of the twenty-three questions required short descriptive answers. Other questions in the survey provided multiple choice answer options with its majority being yes or no questions. The yes or no questions were used while keeping in mind the easiness of participants, to minimize the disparities and confusion in data collection. Nevertheless, those questions were useful in analysing the consumption patterns of both cultural entities' audiences. Three of the multiple-choice questions

gave specific options rather than a yes or no question to retrieve definite outcomes. As mentioned before the survey is a flux of questions about anime and K-pop. While some participants were fans of both, others were exclusive consumers of either anime or K-pop. Consequently, questions specifically meant for one category were sometimes left unattended or were given abrupt responses by those who did not belong to that category. As the margin of such questions was insignificant it has not impeded the purpose of the survey.

The survey was circulated through email and other social media platforms to anime and K-pop enthusiasts in the South Indian state of Kerala. Responses were received from individuals aged between 17 and 60. Since the paper particularly targets youth, the analysis will prioritize the responses from participants aged between 17 and 30. Responses from participants over 30 will be used to determine if the younger generation influenced their exposure to anime or K-pop and for other observations relevant to the analysis.

Out of the 51 responses, 43 (84.3%) came from fans aged between 17 and 25, and from the ones aged between 26 and 30 and over 30, 4 (7.8%) responses were received from each category. 27.5% were anime fans, 35.3% were K-pop enthusiasts, and 37.3% of participants enjoyed both. The duration of them being fans ranged from recent to 11 years, with 5 years being the most common response. While 62.7% replied that they were not influenced by the trends brought by anime and K-pop, 37.3% replied yes. Only 19.6% stated they did not experience any semantic influence, and 80.4% acknowledged that their interest had introduced new words into their vocabulary. 15.7% did not want to collect any merchandise, and 35.3% were able to buy them, while a majority of 49% wished to buy them but could not do it. 88.2%

replied positively regarding the perception change about East Asian countries, especially Japan and South Korea. A majority of participants agreed on researching more about on those countries' cultures and that they think about those cultures with best regards. 49% were looked down upon because of their interest in anime. This question was asked while keeping in mind the phenomenon of infantilizing anime fans, as anime is often mistaken for children's cartoons by many. 37.3% agreed that their interest in anime and K-pop influenced their ambitions for a career, while a majority denied it. A majority of participants, about 68.6%, said yes to the question, asking whether there was a change in their perception of fashion and beauty. 80.4% made new friends because of anime and K-pop. 78.4% consume social media content related to anime or K-pop. 41.2% were introduced to anime through childhood cartoons, 31.4% through friends, 15.7% through social media, and the rest through other means. For K-pop, 39.2% were introduced to it by friends, 27.5% through social media, 19.5% through their familiarity with Western pop music, and the rest through other means. The question of ever collecting freebies related to anime was asked, and a majority 58.8 % of participants chose yes for that; for example, like the Pokemon tazos that came in chip packets. A question about the captivating aspects of K-pop was asked, and the common replies were its music, dance, and use of vibrant colours. The survey ended with asking about their favourite anime or K-pop artist; for anime, *One Piece* was the most common reply, and for K-pop artists, it was *BTS*, and whether they knew any anime or K-pop addicts, a majority (86.3%) chose yes.

The subsequent section will focus on interpreting the substantial outcomes of the survey. The survey found people having an interest in either anime or K-pop at the same time also showed a majority had an interest in both, thus indicating intercultural consumption and exposure from East Asia not limited to a particular country in

Kerala. Though many are not influenced by the trends brought by them yet, the responses showed a high demand for merchandise related to anime and K-pop. Almost half of the participants wished to possess those merchandise, many might be unable to own them because of high prices or lack of authentic ones in the region, but the urge to buy those things is revealed in the survey. Despite their interest, a majority had access to anime freebies or gifts that came with other products. These two observations are crucial in understanding the commodification aspect of a culture industry. Anime and K-pop have also managed to have a semantic influence on their consumers. For example, Japanese words like *otaku* and *sensei* have been used by most anime fanatics and Korean terms like *saranghae*, *sasaeng* and *oppa* are popular usages among K-pop fans. The popularity of K-pop and anime has also led to perception change among their fans. Especially, it changed their view on East Asian countries, allowing them to explore their culture and see them beyond their stereotypical representation. Many showed their interest in visiting those countries in the survey. It also impacted their perception of beauty and fashion, both anime and K-pop have a unique sense of fashion and style, and promote their own beauty standards this would inadvertently influence their fans, and the survey also proved the same. Such exposures broaden the perceptions of the fans allowing them to have insights beyond their own culture. Anime as mentioned before, in the previous chapter, a significant amount of people responded that they grew an interest in it due to their childhood cartoons. For K-pop fans familiarity with the western songs though not in the majority, was a common reply. As for the older generation common replies included suggestions from their children for them to grow an interest in K-pop; anime did not receive any engagement from the older participants in the survey.

The following part of this chapter will delve deeply into the previously mentioned survey-related observations and interpretations, providing thorough analyses. The analyses will primarily adhere to the theories of the culture industry proposed by the Frankfurt School theoreticians. Additionally, the section will consider other crucial observations and incorporate other cultural studies theories when needed.

Many of Adorno and Horkheimer's contributions to the concept of the culture industry could be attributed to the analysis of the engagement of anime and K-pop in Kerala. Both K-pop and anime have become widely commodified due to their popularity. They have become a cultural product that is available in the global business market. Apart from the art they both promote; their popularity has inevitably led to the emergence of other commodities. Notably, in the survey, there was a demand for merchandise. The merchandise ranges from the ones sold by the original creator to copied and inspired ones available in the market. The official or original merchandise are the ones promoted by the creators themselves for instance production companies release anime show related merchandise for the promotion of the show and K-pop artists sell merchandise to promote their albums and other activities. While anime merchandise ranges from game cards, figurines, and cloth collections to video games K-pop also fosters a huge collection of merchandise including photo cards, light sticks, cloth collection, and many more. The audience even when they acknowledge the futility of many such products, willingly collect them because of their feelings and memories attached to a show or music they liked, it becomes personal. A few years ago, the American chips company Cheetos used to give Pokemon cards and tazos as freebies in their chip packet, this urged children to opt for the chips over other ones, so they could accumulate a collection of them. This also

happened in Kerala, as per the survey many agreed that they had access to such items. Japanese and Korean cuisines have gained popularity in the region, especially among the youth. Instant ramen is available almost in all supermarkets in the state. Although Kerala was already familiar with Indo-Chinese foods, the demand for other East Asian cuisines has increased recently. The popularity of anime and K-pop could be considered one of the many reasons for such demands in the region. Many Korean and Japanese restaurants in Kerala make use of K-pop and anime respectively, to attract more customers. The images below illustrate such promotional tactics adopted by them.



Fig 4.1 Popular anime, Naruto poster in Japanese Restaurant YouMee, Kochi, Kerala - Photo by the Author



Fig 4.2 Gallery wall of K-pop idols in Mukhbang Korean Restaurant, Kochi, Kerala - Photo by the Author

Most of the consumers of such enterprises are the youth, in Kerala. Local clothing stores are selling pants and tops that are labelled as Korean style. Korean beauty products including self-care products and makeup, were also able to establish a market in the region. The glass skin, like that of Korean idols and actors, is a concept that most of these beauty brands use, and many of the local beauty brands have also come up with items that promise the so-called Korean glass skin. Hence, Kerala is gradually becoming a commodity haven for East Asian mass culture products.

Another major takeaway from the survey was perception change. This phenomenon could be closely read with the Frankfurt School theoreticians' observation that culture industry controls the consciousness of individuals. The youth in Kerala in the current scenario with more exposure to other cultures have inculcated a broad perspective. Anime and K-pop gave a different view on East Asian countries that exceeds the prevalent stereotypical representations that existed in Kerala, at least among its youth. The newfound demand for their cuisines, cosmetics and other products in the state shows the accepting attitude of youth towards the East Asian culture. As per the survey and other observations, many wanted to visit Japan and Korea. In the current scenario, many students are also interested in pursuing higher studies in those countries:

When the Korean band *BTS* was trending in Kerala, a youth in Malappuram quietly explored the learning opportunities in South Korea surfing the internet while his peers were still tuning into the music. It was then that the attention of 21-year-old...fell on the Global Korean Scholarship (Karattil).

The article used the phrase, "the land of BTS" as a synonym for South Korea exemplifying the role played by K-pop in creating a global picture for its country

(Karattil). Anime character cosplays and K-pop makeup and dressing styles have gradually entered into the content of youth influencers from Kerala. The perception of beauty among fans has evolved, with East Asian beauty standards differing significantly from those in Indian or Western cultures.

Assimilation of those pop cultures in the region had encouraged a sort of indigenization. Hand games inspired by anime characters, namely *Pikachu* and *Dragon Ball Z* were popular among the school students in Kerala. The Korean game phrase ‘Mugunghwa kkochi pieot seumnida’ was seen used instead of ‘Red Light Green Light’ after the success of the Korean drama series *Squid Game* (2021).

The aversion and belittlement felt by anime and K-pop fans from other people in the state could be better understood with concept of rejection of unfamiliarity suggested by Adorno and Horkheimer. K-pop altogether possess a different idea of beauty, it owns a signature style, whether it its costumes or makeup. Especially, in the case of male idols, they contribute to what could be said as a “pan-East Asian soft masculinity” (S.Jung 8.1). Such a male representation is also prevalent in anime. This kind of visual image of men promoted by K-pop stand in contrast with the rugged manly male representations in Kerala society. The ideal assumption of men in Kerala is often associated with having moustache and beard. On the contrary, the “soft masculine” of Korean men, in this case, male K-pop idols, is “highly associated with feminine aesthetics” (8.1). Consequently, the unfamiliarity, attracted some prejudiced eyes, especially from the older generations.

Anime fans on the other hand often go through “infantilization” in Indian society (Chandi and Trehan 6). “Indian fans are continually negotiating their identities as consumers of Japanese popular culture and their position within Indian society”

and often face “mockery” (Rawat 235). A significant number of anime enthusiasts who participated in the survey also mentioned that they were looked down upon because of their interest. Anime is often mistaken for cartoon shows meant for children, such a misconception also exists in Kerala. The young fans are teased for not watching the right shows appropriate for their age.

Anime and K-pop to a certain extent turn towards the West inspiration. Anime has stories from all around the world and not limited to Japan. K-pop was an intercultural offspring of American hip-hop culture. K-pop in its current state came into existence with the debut of *Seo Taiji and Boys* in the 1990s. They “introduced dance-oriented rap music via hip-hop culture” (E.Y Jung 143). Interestingly this intercultural transaction could be analysed through a concept established by Adorno. The abundance of culture industry compromises the revolutionary feature of low culture (Adorno and Rabinbach 12). Hip-hop and rap was part of a subversive culture that was developed by the African American community. As it got globalized and commercialized it became a commodity. The original intention slightly went diminished as all sorts of art forms started to come out in that genre across the globe. Consequently, becoming foundational inspiration for K-pop. The “cult value” got overpowered by “exhibition value”, subsequently allowing derivative art forms like K-pop reach the shores of Kerala (Benjamin 240).

Anime and K-pop are major manifestation of Japan and South Korea's exertion of soft power on the global stage. Soft power stand opposite to coercion or command power of a country; instead, it focuses on persuasion, utilizing the attractiveness of its culture and ideology to gain influence (Nye 166, 167). Hence, K-pop becomes that attractive culture of South Korea and anime of Japan. Apart from entertaining they encourage international interest and admiration for their respective

countries, thus widening their global influence. Such a soft power implicitly maintains the interest of the dominant class in the country. An observation leveraged from Adorno and Horkheimer. Demand for cultural products, services, and institutions ultimately profits the dominant class of a country. Their economic power flourishes more with access to open markets, as the cultural promotions attract foreign investment. It makes way for international alliances and partnerships, allowing the ones in the upper strata of society to extend their influence globally. The resultant beneficial trade agreements and strategic partnerships provide them with a greater ability to shape international norms and policies in ways that align with their interests. The stability a country maintains due to its strong soft power secures them a prestigious international image which in turn creates favourable conditions for the dominant class to survive and maintain their social and economic position.

To conclude, anime and K-pop industries have profitably established their market in Kerala. Consequently, they have made an impact on their consumers, especially the youth. Both the East Asian popular cultural products have blended into Kerala's youth culture to a certain extent. And both industries thrive on the semi-symbiotic relationship between their proprietors and consumers.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Popular culture reflects people. The popular culture of a place gives a sneak peek to its people's lives as it is founded upon and sustained through their likes and dislikes. Though it gets its shape through their choices, it also possesses the ability to mould the choices of its people as well. The research focused on such an ability of popular culture. It tried to prove that the globalization of East Asian popular culture allowed a way for cultural awareness and dissemination, and perception change among its non-native audiences. The paper particularly analyses the effect of anime and K-pop on the youths of Kerala. The analysis leveraged the theories of the culture industry proposed by the Frankfurt School theoreticians, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. As youth becomes the representative of change and, what is new and popular in a society, analysing the youth culture becomes crucial in understanding and studying the trends and changing patterns of the world. This paper tried to give further insight into globalization and the shrinking of the world due to technology and particularly the growth of popular culture that happened due to these changes. Anime and K-pop have also been a topic of interest for many researchers, hence the study tried to create additional developments in that area. The paper studied the engagement, consumption pattern and resultant impact created by anime and K-pop among its young fans in Kerala.

The Marxist theories of the culture industry discussed in the previous chapters critiqued its nature, the character of its audience and the authenticity of art produced in it. It critiqued mass culture and that it commoditises art and diminishes its unique identity. These theories were then used in analysing anime and K-pop. Anime and K-

pop are global pacemakers for East Asian popular culture. They have effectively contributed in altering the stereotypical image of East Asia especially Japan and South Korea to an extent, globally. They allowed people to watch and observe their culture from a different perspective.

Anime entered Indian markets through children's cartoons and effectively created an impression among its audience attracting many fans in India. As it spread across the country it also reached Kerala and gained a significant number of anime enthusiasts in the state. K-pop on the other hand, garnered popularity in India through the North Eastern states. Local TV channels used to broadcast Korean drama series, and Korean movies were popular among film enthusiasts in the country. And also, with K-pop getting global acceptance, its artists attending Western award shows and its widespread through social media helped to make its way to India and eventually to Kerala. Further engagement of both the popular culture created spaces for people with similar interests to come together, this mainly happened through online platforms.

Anime and K-pop being mass-produced entities could be observed as abiding the notions of culture industry proposed by the Frankfurt theoreticians. They inevitably go through commodification. The fans being obsessed with their favourites give in into those commoditising aspects. In Kerala, such a phenomenon is seen through popularity of anime and K-pop related merchandise and freebies among the fans. Many are consumers of online content like memes and fan art. The rise of Japanese and Korean restaurants also signifies such an interest. Both the East Asian popular cultures have also helped the young fans in the region to undergo a perception change. The change happened significantly in terms of the perception of East Asian

culture, removing existing prejudices, and inculcated a new sense of fashion and beauty in them. There were also several instances where this popular culture intersected with the local popular culture. They have also made semantic influence on their fans. At the same time certain prejudices still exist among the people who are not devotees of these East Asian imports. With their popularity and global acceptance, they have become emissaries of Japan and South Korea's soft power.

By applying the critiques of culture industry in analysing the engagement of anime and K-pop in Kerala several aspects of its demand and influence got detangled. The survey conducted proved to be pivotal in backing up certain aspects of it. The theories of culture industry are very important in understanding a society accelerated with technological advancements. Standardization and commercialisation of anime and K-pop was bound to happen. Consecutively, such an occurrence made it possible for their dissemination to happen in Kerala. The aspect of commodification was revealed through the survey participants who yearned to collect merchandise. Many wished to travel to Japan and South Korea, and many even noted that they thought highly of those countries' cultures. In terms of fashion and beauty both industries promote and own a unique style that urges their fans to have a perception change in that area. It would have also affected their personal style. Many had even shown an interest in building a career around their love for anime, K-pop, or both.

While most of the outcomes in the survey backed the arguments put forward in the paper, the answer to a particular question was unexpected. The survey provided evidence that the two major East Asian popular cultures had an influence on them however a majority disagreed that they get easily influenced by the trends put forward by them. These trends could be attributed to immediate promotional products and ideas offered by the two culture industries. Such a response might be due to several

reasons: both the industries are still in a growing phase in Kerala, there are lingering prejudices towards East Asian cultures, and there is an inadequacy of exclusive social spaces and authentic branded merchandise in the regional markets.

The research is practical in assessing and comprehending intercultural contact through popular cultures, particularly between East Asian countries and Kerala. The paper aimed to enhance and contribute to studies based on anime, K-pop and youth culture. The findings assume a generalised view that might not be entirely true in terms of individual cases. This may be considered as a limitation as it fails to apprehend the variability and nuances of specific instances. The survey results might not be true in all cases. The degree of influence created by both industries varies among fans. Though anime and K-pop represents the popular culture of East Asia, the instances that favoured them may not be true for other cultural products from the region. East Asia itself is a broad term, it encompasses a variety of nations that have their own unique culture to offer. Hence, anime and K-pop more specifically speak on behalf of their countries of origin.

Ultimately, the study suggests that anime and K-pop are gradually infiltrating into the youth culture of Kerala. To some degree it has motivated to look at East Asia through a different lens. Paving way for cultural disseminations and exchanges between the two regions. Being mass produced and commercialised they inescapably inculcate the highly critiqued norms and notions of the culture industry proposed by the Frankfurt School of theoreticians. The reach of anime and K-pop is still limited to a certain type of people, their lifestyle and privileges becomes determining factors in allowing such accessibility. The analysis primarily borrowed their concepts of how culture industry commodifies its art, controls consciousness of individuals and maintains the interests of the dominating class. Furthermore, the study points out how

digital media and online platforms facilitate the popularity of anime and K-pop. The communities, both online and offline, where fans gather fosters a sense of shared identity and belongingness. On the other hand, it could be observed as a means of potential cultural homogenization at the expense of the erasure of the local culture. Popular culture exists in a composite form and it requires critical engagement where its covert ideological and economic motives should not be undermined.

Appendix

1. Age

2. Are you a consumer of anime, K-pop, or both?
 - Anime
 - K-pop
 - Both

3. How long have you been a fan?

4. Are you easily influenced by the trends brought by them?
 - Yes
 - No

5. Have you added or borrowed new words in your vocabulary because of them?
 - Yes
 - No

6. Do you collect or want to collect merchandise related to your favourite anime or K-pop band?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I wish to

8. Did your perception of East Asian countries, especially Japan and South Korea, change?
 - Yes
 - No

9. Did it make you do research on their culture?

- Yes
- No

10. Do you think highly of their culture?

- Yes
- No

11. Were you ever looked down upon because of your interest in Anime?

- Yes
- No

12. Had it had any influence on your career decisions?

- Yes
- No

13. Has it changed your perception of fashion and beauty?

- Yes
- No

16. Have you befriended new people because of your interest in anime or K-pop? Are you part of friend circles or communities related to them?

- Yes
- No

17. Does your social media consist of content related to them, like memes, fan art, etc.?

- Yes
- No

18. How were you first introduced to anime?

- Childhood cartoon (like Pokemon, Doremon, Dragon Ball Z)
- Suggestion by friends
- Randomly from Social Media platforms
- Other

19. Have you ever collected freebies related to anime characters?

- Yes
- No

20. How were you introduced to K-Pop?

- Randomly through social media
- Suggestions from friends
- Familiarity with Western Pop genre
- Other:

21. What did you find captivating in K-pop?

22. Name your favourite anime, K-pop band, or both.

23. Do you personally know anyone addicted to K-pop or Anime?

- Yes
- No

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