

**Literature, Culture and Media**  
**Prof. Rashmi Gaur**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology - Roorkee**

**Lecture – 09**  
**High Culture and Popular Culture**

Dear participants, welcome to the fourth module of this week. In the previous modules, we have discussed how the understanding of the word culture has changed and grown and how different theoreticians have addressed this issue. In this module, we would look at how the differentiations between the high and the low culture or high and the low or popular culture erupted in the beginning of the 20th century owing to various socio-economic changes which were taking place in the contemporary world.

What are the reasons behind these categories, were there any particular agendas for the creation of these 2 different types of cultural understandings.

**(Refer Slide Time: 01:15)**

### High Culture and Popular Culture

- Agendas behind creating such categories—Political, social, economic, historical
- Are these merely aesthetic concerns?
- Cultural forms and power are inextricably linked
- High culture and Low or Popular culture as oppositional categories
- Can the boundaries blur? Is such a blurring of the boundaries acceptable or desirable?
- Culture Studies—Study all kinds of texts; popularization of textualities; High/low distinction collapses
- Modernism to Postmodernism—Birth of a new sensibility



Were these agendas social economic, political or is it simply a manner of a historical analysis or do we at these categories merely as being aesthetic concerns? We have also seen how cultural forms, forms which determine and try to define culture and institutions of power are inextricably linked and high culture and popular or low culture are often posed against each other as being oppositional categories.

Later on we find that the critics also started to question the straight jacket positioning and differences within these 2 types of cultures and people started to think in terms of these boundaries being blurred. Later on the theoreticians also looked at the possibilities whether the blurring of the boundaries is acceptable as a cultural form or not. As a cultural studies started to take shape as an independent discipline and they started to study different kinds of text.

And the textualities has as a particular way of a studies became popular, we find that the distinctions between high and low culture is started to collapse. When we further shift from modernism to post-modernism, we find that an entirely new sensibility was being born where these differentiations become more or less redundant and obsolete. However, we find that the first half of the 20th century was dominated by these distinctions between high and low culture or the popular culture as it also came to be known.

So, today we would discuss what are the ways to define them, how they could be a part of the power play which goes on in our cultural institutions. We have seen that culture has been a process of human development in different ways.

**(Refer Slide Time: 03:23)**

- Culture was a process of human development – material, practices and products of intellectual work and art
- High Culture – the best that has been thought and written in the world
- Cultural products of high aesthetic value
- Commonly incorporated into particular contemporary social structures – universities or churches
- Cultural texts, artefacts, ideas, literary forms which are expressive of a dominant class, ideology
  - Often reflect, glorify and preserve the status quo, associated with sophisticated, aristocratic elite/highly educated class



It can be material as well as products of intellectual work and art itself. High culture is often defined as the best that has been thought and written in the world so far. This word is extended to

include cultural products which may have very high aesthetic value. It is commonly incorporated into particular social structures from time to time for example, the universities or prior to the universities, the church was considered to be a repository of high art.

They also incorporate different types of cultural texts, artefacts, ideas, literary forms which are expressive, normally of the ideology of the dominant class. They often reflect, glorify and preserve the status quo because this is how the institutions of power want to retain the power equations. It is also normally associated with the sophisticated people, the aristocratic gentry, the social elite.

**(Refer Slide Time: 04:37)**

- Associated with the ruling classes and elites
- Based on exclusion and selection—functions through exclusivity. High culture is “high” as it excludes the masses who do not possess similar affordability of money etc.
- Incorporates consumption patterns, leisure activities, beliefs, mannerisms, pleasures, perceptions and inclinations of a society’s elite – people with rank, money or recently, education
- Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979), suggests that we internalize our class positions at a young age which structures our tastes and preferences



The notion of high culture is associated with the tastes and preferences of the social elite as well as of the ruling classes. So we can automatically understand that a natural corollary of this association is to base this distinction on exclusion and selections. So we can also say that what constitutes high art or high culture functions through a process of exclusivity. High culture is high as it excludes the cultural forms which are practised by the masses.

Those people who do not possess the similar affordability in terms of money, so we find that high culture retains a certain highness, certain haughtiness as certain critics have also said because it excludes the masses and then focuses only on including the certain classes of elite. It

also incorporates consumption patterns, leisure activities, beliefs and mannerisms as well as what gives us pleasures, what are our perceptions and inclinations.

And high culture is based on the perceptions of the social elite only. People who have been born into money, people who hold certain rank and of late people who have been enabled by their education to transcend the stratified social structure and can come close to the elite. Bourdieu in his famous book which was published in 1979, *Distinction; A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* suggest that we as very young children internalise our class positions.

And it also structures our tastes and preferences for our little age. High culture has a certain class character because it is controlled, defined and produced by a small section of the people only being a prerogative of the elite.

**(Refer Slide Time: 06:46)**

## High Culture

- A prerogative of the 'elite' – the class character, controlled and produced by a small section
- Question of value, worth
  - Higher/lower prestige
  - 'popular' or 'low' culture is denigrated
  - Signifier of 'cultural capital' ( educational assets which promote social mobility of a person in a stratified social order)
- Proponents – is in danger because of widespread popular education and means of communication, and is being replaced by the popular culture
- "Great Divide" – Andreas Huyssen



So, ultimately high culture becomes a question of value and worth. It is also associated with a certain prestige, high culture is associated with better prestige and low culture is automatically associated with somewhat lower prestige. Similarly in the social structures we find that the popular culture or the low culture is normally denigrated, it also becomes a signifier of what is known as cultural capital.

The educational assets which promote the social mobility of a person in an otherwise the stratified social order. So this definition of Bourdieu remains significant even today, proponents of high classes and high culture normally suggest that the high culture is in danger now and the reasons which they came are related with the widespread availability of education and also better accessibility of means of communication.

And they say that high culture is being replaced by the popular culture. Andreas Huyssen has considered this concept of high and low culture as being a great divide which becomes a divisive force between different sections of the society. The high culture automatically somehow assumes an official and authorise status.

**(Refer Slide Time: 08:17)**

- Official or authorized status:
  - Uphold dominant and hegemonic views
  - Create and sustain the conditions for perpetuating cultural hegemony of a class
  - The system of patronage—Royal Patronage
  - Class and social superiority
  - Designated as aesthetically superior; thus worthy of preservation
  - Creation of 'national' literatures
- Idea of the Western Canon



It upholds the dominant and hegemonic views about several issues which are related with our day to day life. It also creates and sustains those conditions which perpetuate the cultural hegemony of a particular class and it being a system of exclusion and inclusion tries to ensure it by taking the help of different types of systems of patronages. High culture is designated as being somehow aesthetically superior.


And therefore, it is considered to be worthy of preservation and therefore, our understanding of what constitutes the national art, the national literature, the national works of art and artefacts ultimately is dependent on how we understand this concept of high culture. And therefore, we

find that the idea of Western canon or let us say the canonisation of literature later on is also deeply linked with these 2 divisions of culture into high and low or popular forms.

**(Refer Slide Time: 09:40)**

### High Culture and Literary Canon

- Definition of 'canon' according to American Heritage Dictionary:
  - An ecclesiastical law or code of laws established by a church council;
  - The calendar of saints accepted by the Roman Catholic Church;
  - One of a chapter of priests serving in a cathedral or collegiate church;
  - A member of a religious community living under common rules and bound by vows.
  - Often capitalized (Canon)-- the part of the Mass beginning after the Sanctus and ending just before the Lord's prayer;
  - The books of the Bible officially recognized by the Church;
  - Music: a composition or passage in which the same melody is repeated by one or more voices
  - A secular law, rule, or code of law;
  - **A basis for judgment, standard, criterion; and an authoritative list, as of the works of an author**



If we try to look at the definition of canon, we find that most of the definitions are related with the clergy. I have cited from the American Heritage dictionary in which we find 10 possible meaning of the word canon. Out of these 10, we find that 6 are related with different aspects of clergy. It can be an ecclesiastical law or code of laws established by a church council, the calendar of saints which has been accepted by the Roman Catholic Church.

A member of a religious community living under a common rules and bound by vows etc., Later on it also came to be associated with music particularly, the classical music and we find that a particular meaning is deleted with the way we understand music. A particular meaning is also related with the idea of canon being a secular law rule or code of law. The last 2 meanings are based with the way we judge phenomena outside these two realms.

So, it can be a basis for judgement, standard and criterion and the next meaning is related with the way we look at the works of an author or an authoritative list which has been prepared to indicate a certain phenomenon.

**(Refer Slide Time: 10:54)**

- Derived from the ancient Greek word *kanōn*, which means a measuring rod or standard
- History of western literary canon goes back to the history of the Bible— Authorized and official versions of the Bible
- Refers to the body of texts/narratives which are seen as worthy of being preserved, studied and disseminated
- The best/most important/most representative works of literature
- Matters of critical and aesthetic judgment central to what is included in the canon
- Canonization provides sophistication to a literary/cultural work, as well as possibilities of being studied seriously



The word canon etymologically has been borrowed from an ancient Greek word *kanon* which means a measuring tool or standard. As we have seen in the way different meanings and connotations have been structured of this word, the history of Western literary canon goes back to the history of the Bible, the authorised and the official versions of the Bible. It also refers to the body of text and narratives which has seen as worthy of being preserved studied and disseminated.

We can say that it is a compilation of the best, the most important and the most representative works of literature. So we find that matters of critical and aesthetic judgement are central to what is included in this perception of what constitutes canon. Canonisation is also related with a certain understanding of sophistication in terms of a work of literature or a cultural artefact and at the same time.

Once a work has been included in the canon, there are enhance possibilities of it being studied more seriously. So, it does provide certain stardom to a work if it is included in a literary canon.

**(Refer Slide Time: 12:12)**

- Canon forms a closed tradition—changes are resisted. Bastion of a privileged few—learned scholars, intellectuals, teachers, professors, critics
  - Literacy was historically the prerogative of the privileged
  - Exclusion of the illiterate and poor of both the sexes
  - Commoners—Lower classes, artisans, traders
- Behrendt: Canons are value-determining lists ingrained in our education system. The process which determines inclusion in canon is essentially political:
 

“The Western literary canon has historically been dictated by economically secure, traditionally educated, socially privileged white men”



It also entails that canon forms a close tradition and any ideas of changing the canon or any ideas related with changing the way we look at canon and interpret it are automatically resisted. So it ultimately hands up as being a bastion of the privileged few, earlier it used to be to the learned few, the ecclesiastical clergy later on we find that it was dominated by certain universities, intellectuals, critics etc.

This exclusion was possible because literacy was historically a prerogative of the privileged few in the society. The illiterate and the poor and particularly women were excluded from this facility. At the same time we find that the commoners also did not have this privilege of being highly educated or literate and therefore, what Behrendt has suggested becomes doubly meaningful to us.

The canons are value determining lists which are ingrained in our education system and the process which determines inclusion in canon is essentially political, so what Behrendt has suggested here; makes a correct sense evident today's world and he says that the Western literary canon has historically been dictated by economically secure, traditionally educated and socially privileged white men.

So, in that idea we find that the forces which have dominated the social scenario since certain centuries have been hinted at. People who economically belong to a better class, people who



have the privileges of being educated and people who are in a favourable position as far as our understandings of gender and race are concerned.

**(Refer Slide Time: 14:20)**

- Inclusion in canon confers status—matter of privilege, confers recognition, establishes credentials. Sign of the superior quality of works—The canon becomes the benchmark
- Traditionally the canon was dominated by the ecclesiastics, also later on by Oxford and Cambridge circle
  - In the medieval and early modern era; education was not democratic
  - Classical over Vernacular; Greek, Roman texts, Grammar, Philosophy, Logic and Latin; Moral criticism: Education aesthetics and morality intertwined
- “The remnant of class-based exclusionary thinking is visible in today’s society in the disdain with which the cultural elite usually greet “popular” art...” (Behrendt)



Inclusion in canon, therefore also offers certain status It is related with recognition and how our credentials are established and how it becomes a matter of privilege. It also becomes automatically a sign of the superior quality of work, we can say that the canon are being included in the canon becomes ultimately a benchmark for everything which is related with literature and culture.

As we have said it has been dominated earlier by the ecclesiastics later on by the teachers of the Oxford and Cambridge circle etc. so, the remnant of class based exclusionary thinking is visible in today's society as Beherendt as said, “in the disdain with which the cultural elite usually, greet, popular art”, so there is a way in which we look at the popular art in a manner of condensation and this is exactly the idea which Beherendt wants to suggest here.

**(Refer Slide Time: 15:18)**

- Critique of the tradition of western literary canon by feminist and Black scholars and writers as being exclusionary
- Arnoldian view of literature and culture has been abandoned –The best of what has been written. The best: representative and enduring category
- T.S Eliot: “The Tradition and the Individual Talent,” suggests unconventional definitions
- Behrendt, “The sad irony of changing canons is that doing so merely replaces one set of narrow and privileged judgments with another equally narrow, but different, set of standards by which to decide who gets in and who doesn’t ... And, even sadder, canon revisions and canon substitutions are usually vindictive: The new ‘in’ group punishes the ‘old’ by excluding it, bashing it and admitting only those whose work reflects the new ‘agenda’ that has been set in place.”



The idea of the Western literary canon has come into a lot of criticism by different schools of feminist thought as well as by the Black scholars because it was being exclusionary and it was not objective. The view of Arnold of literature and culture being the best of what has been written has now also been abandoned because the best becomes a representative and enduring category but at the same time it is open to different interpretations by different people.

This idea that the canonisation we also be reviewed, somehow has an earliest reference in T.S. Eliot, famous essay on “The Tradition and the Individual talent” in which he is suggested unconventional definitions of what constitutes talent and how we should look at this idea of tradition in fact. I got Beherendt again because he has ultimately been able to make very pertinent points.

Questions he has raised are highly relevant to how this distinction could take place and has continued since then, he says that “the sad irony of changing cannons is that doing so merely replaces one set of narrow and privileged judgements with another which are equally narrow but different set of standards by which to decide who gets in and who does not and sadder cannon revision and canon substitutions are usually vindictive”.

And Beherendt has given a particular focus on this idea, he says “that the new in group punishes the old by excluding it, bashing it and admitting only those whose work reflects the new agenda

that has been set in place". So, it becomes clear that the manner in which literary canon is ultimately selected and finalised is a highly subjective manner and it is also highly political. The origins of these two distinctions can be found during the modernist era.

**(Refer Slide Time: 17:45)**

---

## Modernism

- High Moderns and Low Moderns
- Preserves the high/low binary
- Search for novelty—innovations, 'form' over 'content'
- Movement is highly cosmopolitan and eclectic
- Nostalgia for the 'golden' pre-capital age
- Modernist writers relied extensively on philosophy, psychology and classical literature and mythology - demanded erudition from readers
- Openness to mass forms—
  - Magazines, Popular novels, films



---

It was during the early part of the 20th century that we find that the distinctions between high and low moderns started to proliferate. Later on they were denied by the post-modernist thought but during the modernist, we find that the debates about high and low continued, so we find that in their search for innovation, the modernist people also went into the debates of form versus content etc.

And this movement ultimately turn out to be highly cosmopolitan and eclectic. There were certain other trends which also gave rise to this debate of high and low culture for example, there had been a nostalgia in this era for the Golden pre capital age, as if there was an age which existed which had a rosy phenomena for different sections of the society. Modernist writers also relied extensively on philosophy, on psychology, classical literature and mythology.

And therefore, they also demanded certain erudition from readers. The literature which most of the modern writers were producing will not meant for the common masses, they expected some participation on the part of the audience and readers also. The openness to mass forms somehow was looked at in a derogatory manner for example, magazines as we would later say were

reduced to being a woman place, a woman entertainment, popular novels and films also in the early days were not included in one's definition of literature.

So, these popular forms were looked at with a certain disdain and therefore we find that it is during this era of modernist belief that the distinction between high and low cultures gained grounds and they also became popular.

**(Refer Slide Time: 19:39)**

## Changing Perceptions

### 1. Culture Studies and Frankfurt School

- Questions the status of the canon
- Emphasis on different cultural formations,
- Theorization on high and low culture, popular and mass culture
- What happens the canon when boundaries between high and popular culture become porous?
- The impact of capitalism and technological development on traditional forms of cultural expressions

### 2. Postmodernity: Celebration of all narratives/texts



The perceptions started to change almost immediately and we find that the critics associated with the Frankfurt School started to question these notions early on. They question the various status of the canon and they also emphasised on the existence of different cultural formations which were evident at any given moment of human history. At the same time, we find that various critics associated with the Frankfurt School started to theorise on high and low culture, popular and mass culture and the impact of the media and the mass culture on the way we understand and appreciate our culture.

And I would point out particularly Adorno and Horkheimer in this context. They also try to understand about the phenomena which takes place when the boundaries between high and low cultures become porous and we cannot segregate them very effectively. At the same time, we find that the impact of capitalism and technological development on traditional forms of cultural expressions was also studied by these philosophers.

At the same time, we find that with the onset of a post-modern attitude amongst the critics which started to celebrate different types of narratives and texts and was based on the proliferation of the smaller groups. The idea of high and low culture was being continually challenged and opposed.

**(Refer Slide Time: 21:31)**

---

## High and Low Culture

- High and low: Markers of aesthetic "positioning" vis-a-vis popular or mass culture
- Indicative of a new historical dialectic brought in by technological and economic modernization, urbanization and all its stresses.
- In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson argues that in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "two distinct literary cultural structures, dialectically interrelated and necessarily presupposing each other - mass culture and high culture" emerged.
- Andreas Huyssen: mutual dependence of high and low cultures: mass culture as the latent subtext of the Modernist project.



---

So, it becomes clear to us that it was in the beginning of the 20th century that these two parallel literary cultural structures came into being and they were often juxtaposed against each other as markers of aesthetic positioning. So the high and low cultures became indicators of a new historical dialectic which was brought in by technological and economic modernisation, urbanisation.

And at the same time, all they related stress patterns which are associated with it. It is also pertinent to quote, Andreas Huyssen here who says that there is a mutual dependence of high and low cultures as mass culture is the latent subtext of the modernist project.

**(Refer Slide Time: 22:12)**

- Gendering of cultures by political, aesthetic and psychological discourses: High culture has been, and remained, a privileged realm of patriarchal and 'masculine'
- Notions of cultural inferiority of women. Traditions of excluding women from high culture were commented on only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Virginia Woolf
- Mass culture as feminine: from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, pejorative feminine characteristics have been ascribed to the mass culture, i.e., popular and family magazines, fictional best sellers, whereas the true novel was pure and severe
- Cultural demarcation is a problem of capitalist modernization, as well as of patriarchal structures that support it (Andreas Huyssen)



We also find that there is a process of gendering of cultures around this time. So in political, aesthetic and psychological discourses, we find that high culture is normally reclaimed as being patriarchal and therefore masculine. High culture was retained, promoted and defined by the privileged few and since this is a patriarchal world order, we find that it was promoted by men only.

So, automatically it came to be associated with patriarchal forces and was termed as being masculine. Notions of cultural inferiority have always been associated with women throughout the medieval ages, so the traditions of excluding women from what can be understood as high culture now were commented on only in the beginning of the 20th century, when we have critics like Virginia Woolf and much later a critic like Simone De Beauvoir commenting on the exclusion of women from the production of culture.

So, mass culture we find was looked at as being feminine. From the late 19th century itself we find that pejorative and feminine characteristics have ascribed to the mass culture. Whether they were popular magazines, which were considered to be a pastime for women only, whether they were fictional bestsellers who were normally studied and enjoyed by the less literate people and also by women.

Whereas in comparison, we find that the true journal of novel was considered to be pure and severe and therefore masculine. Popular novel and popular fiction magazines etc., came to be termed as having femininity in built in them. So cultural demarcation is a problem of capitalist modernisation and also of patriarchal structures which support this capitalist modernisation.

**(Refer Slide Time: 24:30)**

- Gendering of cultures by political, aesthetic and psychological discourses:  
High culture as 'masculine', Mass culture as feminine
- Eric Hobsbawm's *Age of Empire*:
  - Challenges the polarization of high and low culture in modernism
  - Accounts for the widening gap between high and low culture—"growing divergence between what was contemporary and what was 'modern'"



In different cultures we find that high culture is understood as being masculine and mass culture is understood as being feminine. It is pertinent to quote, Eric Hobsbawm here at this point who says that “the polarisation of high and low culture in modernism had to be challenged later on and it also accounts for the widening gap between high and low culture as a growing divergence between what was contemporary and what was modern”.

A major philosopher who immediately comes to our mind when we talk about high and low culture and these stratification, it is Pierre Bourdieu.

**(Refer Slide Time: 25:08)**

## Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002)

- Primarily concerned with the dynamics of power in society
- Also how power is transferred across and within generations in elusive and diverse ways
- Influences: Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Weber, Marx, Durkheim and Claude Levi-Strauss, Pascal
- Cultural, social and symbolic forms of capital as opposed to its simple economic form in traditional thought
- *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979), judged as the sixth most important work in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the International Sociological Association



Bourdieu is primarily concerned with the dynamics of power in society and at the same time, he is equally interested in understanding how power is transferred across and within generations in ways which are elusive and diverse at the same time. He has been influenced by major philosophers particularly Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Weber, Mark, Durkheim, Claude Levi-Strauss and particularly Pascal.

In his views, we find that cultural, social and symbolic forms of capital have been talked about as opposed to the simple economic form of capital in traditional thought. His book which was published in 1979, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* as being judged as the sixth most important work in the 20th century by the International Sociological Association.

**(Refer Slide Time: 26:08)**



- Interrelationship between social stratification and aesthetic taste
- Our social status is depicted by how we present our social space to others
- Children learn aesthetic preferences of their class fractions at a very young age and this learning guides them towards appropriate social positions, behaviors that are suitable for them and they also develop distaste towards other types of behavior.
- Four types of capital:
  - Economic capital – how much money
  - Cultural capital – what counts good for a social group, Museums vs. street boxing, socialization and tastes
  - Social capital – who we know matters, family, political party
  - Symbolic capital – rests on recognition; power one has to name and define who is who



Bourdieu has suggested that there is the close interrelation between how social stratification is done and the way aesthetic taste is cultivated in different generations. He also says that our social status is depicted by how we present our social space to others. In his view children learn aesthetic preferences of their class fractions at a very young age and this learning guides them towards appropriate social positions at a later stage.

It also guides them to adopt behaviours that are suitable for them and at the same time, they also develop a certain abhorrence towards those types of behaviour which are not in consonance with their not class appropriate behaviours. He has also suggested that the meaning of the term capital should not be equated only with money. In his ideas we find that there are 4 types of capital; economic, cultural, social and symbolic.

The economic capital is quite clear how much money do we have. Cultural capital is important for Bourdieu because in his opinion, it is related with what counts good for a social group for example, who wants to visit Museum during the leisure hour and who wants to attend a boxing match on the screen. So it is related with what type of socialisation practices we have and also what type of tastes do we have.

The social capital is related with who we know, for example the family, political party, other acquaintances, the circles within which we move. A symbolic capital rest on recognition our understanding of who we can name and we can define who is who.

**(Refer Slide Time: 28:08)**

- "Differences in cultural capital mark the differences between the classes"
- Cultural capital – social assets of a person, education, style of speech, dress – material and symbolic goods -- social-relation within an economy of practices
- Cultural capital is inherited and cultivated cumulatively over time
- Still, these forms of culture are interconnected
- Poor are aligned with low culture and the rich are aligned with high
- Habitus: the built-in, subconscious manner in which we perceive things and learn to categorize them – unconsciously it structures our tastes and actions
- Everyday tastes are based on social status and power. They are not arbitrary



So, Bourdieu says that differences in cultural capital, mark the differences between the classes, the cultural capital that is the social assets of a person, the type of education one gets, the style of a speech which one learns, the dress material, the symbolic goods, the social relations within an economy of practice is associated with cultural capital which is inherited and cultivated cumulatively over a passage of time.

A still all these forms of culture are interconnected. For example, the economic capital is related with the social capital and social capital is related with the cultural capital so on and so forth. He also says that poor are aligned with low culture and the rich are aligned with high culture. Another interesting concept which Bourdieu has given is the concept of habitus, that means that they built-in subconscious manner in which we perceive things and we learn to categorise them.

Unconsciously this idea is structures out taste actions. So, Bourdieu suggest that our everyday tastes and our everyday actions are in a way not arbitrary, they are based on our social status and on how we perceive our within social stratification. In surveys related with musical taste, he

suggests how high status people in our economic strata's prefer a classical music and how people who belong to lower economic status is normally opt for pop music.

**(Refer Slide Time: 29:53)**

- Levels of cultural consumption are a marker of class
- Music preferences
  - High status: classical music. Low status: pop music
    - Blue Danube - manual workers, domestic servants, craftsmen
    - Rhapsody in Blue - Secretaries, engineers, junior administrative executives
- Food choices
  - Working class meal is characterized by impressions of abundance, plates are filled twice, preference for rich fatty food
  - Bourgeoisie meal has sequencing of courses – fish, meat, cheese, dessert. Healthy and less fatty
  - Teachers prefer exotic food – Chinese, health food
- These distinctions of high and low culture are arbitrary. Are designed to emphasize and confirm social status and power



He has suggested in a surveys and on the basis of the surveys that Blue Danube was popular among manual workers, domestic servants and craftsman, people who were not exposed to high education because of their economic class. Rhapsody in blue on the other hand is preferred by secretaries, engineers, junior administrative executives, people who could afford a better education. This is also reflected in the food choices.

And Bourdieu survey tell us that the working class meal is normally characterised by impressions of abundance. There is an insistence on filling up our plates twice and there is also a common reference for the rich and fatty food. In comparison to this, a Bourgeoisie meal has a sequencing of course for example, fish, meat etc., and the emphasis is on not on shows of abundance but on healthy and less fatty food.

In comparison to these 2 classes, the educated class, teachers for example prefer exotic food but these distinctions of high and low culture are arbitrary and they have been designed and capped to emphasise and conform social status and power.

**(Refer Slide Time: 31:09)**

- A cultural preference may be legitimate or illegitimate, depending on whether it is endorsed by cultural authority (!)
  - Legitimate: authentic or exotic cultural tastes
  - Illegitimate: Popular, familiar, accessible, bland
- High class cultural consumption is omnivorous
- It is increasingly “diversified and inclusive” and can draw from many cultural forms simultaneously – jazz, Bluegrass, Cuban music
- However, it is still a distinction and overtones with command and clout are still present
- In newer cultural pursuits, a camouflaged form of status-seeking is in-built



A cultural preference according to Bourdieu may also be legitimate or illegitimate depending on whether it is endorsed by cultural authority and the idea of cultural authority as we have seen in the previous few slides is highly subjective and therefore, the canonisation is also controlled and is a political affair. According to Bourdieu, a legitimate cultural choice or a preference is authentic or exotic taste.

On the other hand, illegitimate is normally understood in terms of being popular, familiar something which is bland and accessible. He also says that high class cultural consumption is omnivorous by temperament, it can be increasingly diversified and inclusive and can draw from several cultural forms simultaneously, for example it may be interested not only in knowing about classical but it may show interest in jazz, Bluegrass, Cuban Music for example.

However, the distinction between high and low culture is still a distinction and overtones with command and clout are still present in this distinction. In the newer cultural pursuits, we find that a camouflaged form of the status seeking is in-built. So, we end our discussion of high and low culture at this point, in our next module we will take up a discussion of what constitutes popular culture and at the same time, what are the sub culture and countercultures, thank you.