

RAP IN INDIA – The Complicated Question of Authenticity

JAYANTI DATTA

Sivanath Sastri College (South City College), Kolkata

Abstract: What is known as “Underground” Rap music as opposed to “Commercial” Rap started gaining ground in India from the 1990’s onwards. It is now rapidly moving from the margins towards the center of the cultural field, and is gaining huge popularity among the youth. Rap music has carved out a new sub culture, a new sense of identity formation where there was none before. This paper, which concentrates on Rap in Mumbai and Kolkata, wishes to investigate, in particular, one of the markers of Rap identity, that is, Authenticity. To what extent is authenticity possible in a Late Capitalist society? The age is characterized by a general disillusionment and anger centering around concepts of liberty and equality. Under scholarly discussion is the concept of Imagined Communities, which with their own visions, are replacing the sense of the sacred and the collective. There is a huge amount of international flow of images and attempts to monitor and control that flow. The paper wishes to analyze the manner in which Rap, with its origins in the inner cities of America, has been localized in the two Indian cities. It wishes to show that Rap retains its authenticity through artistic moments of subversion within the system, through the expression of everyday struggle, or what has been termed the everyday sublime, in a raw and contemporary idiom. It shows how those who have been under represented or non-represented in artistic expression are finding their own voice and are boldly laying their claim on economic and symbolic capital. Since very little academic research has been done on the subject in India, there is tremendous scope for all scholars to pursue study in this field and since it is directly related to giving a vibrant voice to new urban realities in an innovative idiom, it is of great interest to all listeners, but specially to the youth.

Key words : Urban Folk; New Identity; Everyday Sublime; Authenticity; Late Capitalism