



## ROLE OF TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract:

*The role of communication has been very significant since the beginning of history. With the development of science and technology, the forms and way of communication have become more specialized. In a country like India, so vast and varied, modern mass media alone does not constitute the sum total of communication channels. We have T.V., newspaper, internet etc. But the millions of people in rural areas have no regular access to such mass media due to poverty and illiteracy. With 35 per cent of the population unlettered and with the media's reach largely restricted to urban areas-information, education & entertainment do not reach a large majority of the people. Our society is characterized by a complex social system with different caste, classes, creeds, and tribes. The high rate of illiteracy and poverty added to the inadequacy of the mass media to reach almost 700 million people who reside in village. To them, the mass media proved to be glamorous, impersonal and unbelievable in comparison with the familiar performance of traditional artist whom the villagers could not only see and hear but even touch emotionally. The traditional media can be used to reach these people in the process of change and development of the country. Traditional folk media have a remarkable impact on rural society because of their acceptable idioms, functional significance and entertainment component. Folk media can overcome the difficulty of language, speech, words and other barriers of communication like, interest, understanding, interpretation, attitude and perception. Traditional folk media are the most important vehicle of social change. While a lot of modification may be needed to convey social as well as agricultural messages, traditional media will easily carry social issue related to the rural development. Today, both the traditional and modern media are complement each other. Therefore, we need to keep our traditional media alive by continuously and cautiously, as well as possible with the modern media. These traditional media will not only help in the development activities, but will also help in preserving and transmitting our culture, tradition and values to the next generation.*

### KEYWORDS:

Traditional Media, Folk Media, Rural Development, mass media, Folk.

### INTRODUCTION:

Traditional media means the mediums through which the cultural traits passed from generation to generation. Keeping in view their intimacy, as they are very close to the heart of the people, folk media prove to be powerful tools of communication in the rural society.

Furthermore, the traditional media is available to all and enjoyed by persons of different age groups generally at very low cost. The most important advantage of folk media is its flexibility in day to day

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life and it can be introduced into traditional folk from art such as wall paintings, puppet show, folk songs, dances, dramas, melas and festivals, munadi, bioscope, proverbs, riddles, story telling, tamasha, nautanki etc. Thus, the folk art forms play a prominent role in rural development.

The urge to express, communicate, and share something beautiful gave birth to performing arts such as folk and traditional media. In the process, the living progressive impulse to the timeless universal got a coherent shape in creative designs. Folk performing arts have changed structure continuously over centuries, modifying to the needs of changing situations, yet continuing to be functionally relevant to society. "Tradition" suggests a process of the transmission of age-old values and the contextual manifestation and interpretation of the universal. Tradition is not only a repetitive behavioural pattern or some persistent symbol or motif in community culture; it is also an assertion of an identity, a revival and regeneration of the life-force of the community. Traditional media rely on this cultural support and context.

90% of the world's population lives in developing countries and 70% of them live in rural areas. Mass media such as newspapers, television, and the internet do not effectively reach these people, or as many research studies show, these media do not have the required impact in terms of motivating change and development. The high rate of illiteracy added to the inadequate reach of mass media impede almost 80% of India's population who reside in the rural areas. Folk arts and traditional media are the aesthetic components of the concepts of belonging and affinity in a cultural context. In traditional societies, art is an integral part of the process of living in the community.

For social change and development, what is required is a change in the beliefs and the value systems of individuals, thus making them more adaptive and responsive to organic evolution and growth. The role of the development communicator is to find communicative ways to influence these beliefs and value systems. The communication potential of Indian traditional performing arts has been proven time and again throughout history: Alha, the popular ballad of Uttar Pradesh, and its counterparts like Laavani of Maharashtra, Gee-gee of Karnataka, Villupaattu of Tamil Nadu, and Kabigan of Bengal (which changed their content and focus depending on the contemporary need), were effective in arousing the conscience of the people against the colonial rule of the British; traditional media became effective in the many political and social campaigns launched by Mahatma Gandhi; and, after independence, the Union government continued to utilise these traditional performing arts to convey messages and generate awareness of development programmes in the rural areas.

Traditional media has greatest appeal to the masses and have qualities of touching the deepest emotions of the illiterate millions. Among these puppetry is believed to be the oldest form of popular theater in India. It is important for communicating technology to the farmers in the village life, its problems and solutions. Folk theatre form like Tamasha, Nautani, Keertana or Harikatha attract the rural audiences most, so people can be educated through the mediums to bring about desirable changes in their behavior. Street play is not like theater but it attracts a large number of people. The villagers have a great fascination for their folk dances and folk songs. Melas or country fairs are synonymous with joy and gaiety and in the rural areas where life follows a hard routine, nothing is more welcome to the people than the prospect of a festival and mela. Story telling has been one of the best and most commonly used method of instruction in informal education, religious propagation, rural development etc. Riddle is also an educational device through which elders used to communicate knowledge. Proverbs which predominate in oral civilization represent the essence of rural wisdom and knowledge. Bioscope is also a popular folk medium used for entertainment and for propagation of information on education, agriculture etc.

The traditional media should be an integral part of any rural development programme. Wherever possible, it should be integrated with the modern mass media, but in all cases integration with the ongoing extension work is vital. There is big gap between the modern scientific knowledge and the knowledge possessed by the common masses. This gap is to be bridged by communicating effectively the developmental information to the rural masses. The messages communicated through the traditional media gain access to the mind through audio and video effects. The use of the eyes and the mind produces a sense of richness in meaning on the individuals. This mental reaction is both intellectual and emotional. They create a high degree of interest and make learning more permanent. The poorest man had access to his culture, expressed either in story, poem, play, song, custom, rituals or a variety of other forms of characteristics of folk culture. As these are face to face interaction between the conveyor and the recipient, there is scope for clarification of doubts and acquisition of full information. The influence on the recipient is lasting.

Folk media should be an integral part of any communication programme for rural development. Wherever possible, these should be integrated with mass media but in all cases, integration with ongoing extension work is vital. The prerequisites to the use of folk media are:

1) an understanding of the rural audience; and

ii) the use of these media to provide rural people with entertainment in order to attract their attention and to ensure their participation in developmental activities.

The significance of folk arts in social and political communication was felt and recognised by Jawaharlal Nehru who once said, "I am greatly interested in the development of a people's theatre in India. I think there is a great room for it, provided it is based on the people and their traditions. Otherwise it is likely to function in the air. It is a people's approach. Nevertheless, I think an effort should be made in the direction." (IPTA bulletin, 1943).

**STRENGTH & ADVANTAGES OF TEADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA:-**

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Traditional folk media that cover the various performances that relate to express all events and facts, ideas & thoughts of the respective rural society through the presentation in the manner of pleasure & enjoyments. Although, traditional folk media, say what, are mostly come to us ridiculously or humorously as well. But, it does never mean that the traditional folk media has no effective message, which is incapable to influence or impact the rural audiences. On the contrary, it could be stressfully said, that the traditional folk media can mould or motivate the numerous unwary and illiterate villagers effectively. It cater what for the rural people, are mostly in easy and understandable manner. It apply very common and widely used languages of the respective society which make any presentation understandable quickly. The presentations as catered by the traditional folk media, always come to the rural people in the form of entertainment and enjoyments as well. On the way of giving pleasure and enjoyment, traditional folk media educate the rural illiterates so many, by rendering useful informations regarding healthcare, child & women education, employment and other roundabout, as to make the rural people wary of the present life. As the performers of the traditional folk media, are all concerned to the respective rural society, can present various facts, difficulties, applicable resources for better output and all other ins and out of the society in better manner. So, messages evolved from such rural media naturally, would serve the purpose of numerous backwarded rural people definitely. Beside this, as there is minimal accessibility to the mass media like, newspaper, radio and television in the rural society, so, major people's interests and emphasis is naturally lying on such traditional folk media predominantly. As the Traditional folk media, cater its major programmes through 'face to face' presentations to the audiences, it can command the 'confidence' of them as well. It can earn the 'credibility' through its live presentations easily from the audience. So, the Traditional folk media take the opportunity of 'moulding' and 'motivating' the rural people, by delivering its' messages. It is true, that the traditional folk media have significant contribution towards bringing the success of many developmental programmes like 'Family Welfare', 'Children Education' etc as undertaken by the government of the state. It also have inspired the rural people in adopting the latest techniques in cultivation as well. Traditional folk media thus, can claim to be the 'mentor' of unaware and backwarded rural society. Modern mass media today, pay more attention and emphasis on the various enchanting as well as humorous programmes all, as catered by the traditional folk media with a view to further presentation in their channels. Presently, the television medium cater off and on, the programmes from 'traditional folk media' lively. It can be considered as the 'reward' paid to the 'Traditional folk media' for their dedication to the rural society people. Traditional folk media have considerable flexibility in comparishon to other mass media that have. It can introduce any messages instantly, according to its necessity for betterising the presentation, which other mass medium can not perform. Above all, it can impact the audience with an immediate effect through its catered programmes, in exchange of less expenses that it can afford easily. At the sametime, the rural people so, can enjoy all programmes that the traditional folk media provide in dedicative manner.

**ROLE OF FOLK MEDIA:-**

Folk media play very important role on the rural citizens of our country. The rural people are mostly, illiterate, simple and ignorant as well, and this is why 'Folk Media' have come to be very suitable to them all. As the messages all, delivered by the folk media, are easy and understandable quickly as well, So, the villagers can enjoy its presented program as a whole. Very few common errors that take places in our daily life, folk media oftenly try to point out those, as to aware through their presentation. Folk media carry a diverse messages, of education, political, social, healthcare and agricultural innovation, as to inform and educate the rural citizens. In the village life, where the medium of mass communication like radio, newspaper and television, have not been profuse introduced, folk media have tried to compensate such wider incovrage as well as the communication gap. Folk media, as it do not maintain any decorum and well any protected status like other mediums of mass communication have, that allows the rural audiences to

come closer to such media considerably well. On the other hand, the communicator presents the messages, related to the facts that happen in village life everyday. As the major messages in folk media, are delivered in the form of entertainment, to the audiences, who have no experience or any tastes for other types of amusement or entertainment at all like other urban citizens, tend to come closer with such easily available rural media of interests and get themselves stuck to its presented programmes all with greater emphasis. The predominant emphasis of rural people, has been mostly utilized by the folk media, through their presentation of varied programmes, that contribute to the development of rural sector significantly. It caters to so many programmes on 'family welfare', 'adult & women education', 'uses of fertilizers to boost the crops production', 'polio vaccination' etc. so many other issues, with a view to aware and motivate the unwary rural people, as to impulse them to the right direction, in achieving the goals for the development of the nation as well. Although, folk media messages, are insufficient, lack of proper evidence or documentation and indecently catered to the audiences, it appears to be fruitful and exist up to the mark to the mark of the living standard of the rural villagers or people to pursue their needs and demands as well.

**CONCLUSION**

The indigenous equivalent of exogenous mass media are the folk media which facilitates communication among the rural mass for socioeconomic growth and development and on the same token we too observed the powerful performance and wonderful message delivery with utmost accuracy and precision through electronic and printed mass media. Both traditional media as well as electronic and printed mass media are unique in their own way. Though they can do marvelous work independently, together they can make communication more effective and authentic when employed for developmental activities of the society. Thus, the planner and the policy maker and media buyers should not hesitate to make a perfect blend of this two different types of media while addressing the need and interest of lot many people across the country, who by and large are considerably heterogeneous with regard to their taste language, culture and comfort.

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