GJMC S3 02 (M)

Traditional Folk Media

SEMESTER - III

JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

BLOCK - 1

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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DETAILED SYLLABUS

BACHELOR OF ARTS

JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

SEMESTER - III

BLOCK - 1

TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA

Unit – 1: TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA **Pages : 7-20**

Traditional folk media – an introduction, Nature of traditional folk media, Communication through traditional folk media, Traditional media as part of socio-cultural and ritual communication

Unit – 2: FEATURES OF TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA **Pages : 21-36**

Traditional media as a mass medium, Features and characteristics of traditional media –its advantages and disadvantages, Storytelling as the core of traditional media

Unit – 3: TRADITIONAL MEDIA IN INDIA **Pages : 37-51**

History and growth of traditional media in India- a brief overview of some of the traditional folk media forms of India, Applications of traditional media for development purposes

Unit-4 : TECHNOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS ON TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA **Pages : 52-65**

Impact of electronic media on traditional media, Mass communication media vis-à-vis folk culture, success stories of the use of traditional media as a catalyst of social change and development

Unit- 5: TRADITIONAL MEDIA FOR DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION **Pages : 66-79**

Development communication and traditional media- development communication, traditional media as development media

Unit – 6 : TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA AND INDIAN CULTURE **Pages : 80-93**

Features of folk tradition- role of traditional media, Media for communicating social ethos- traditional media and social ethos, modern mass media and social ethos, Folk media as a platform for disseminating information about Indian culture

Unit – 7 : RELEVANCE OF TRADITONAL FOLK MEDIA **Pages : 94-107**

Traditional folk forms in rural India – Folk Theatre, Folksongs, Narrative forms, Religious discourse, puppet show, Impact on rural development, uses in different fields

COURSE INTRODUCTION:

Traditional Folk Media is the first course of the third semester degree programme of Journalism and Mass Communication . This course has been divided into two blocks, with first block containing seven units and the second block consisting of eight units. This paper would give you a brief overview of traditional folk media, its basic features, relevance in the society and technological implications of traditional folk media. The traditional forms of communication constitute a potential source for conveying messages for economic and social development. Various concepts, themes and sub-themes have been discussed in a detailed and simple, comprehensive language so that you do not find any difficulty in understanding them. We expect you to gain a thorough and comprehensive idea about Traditional Folk Media after completion of this course.

While going through this course, you will come across some along-side boxes, which are put on the left side or right side of the text. These boxes will explain to you the meaning of some words and concepts within the text. Apart from this, there will be some broad and short questions which have been included under 'Activity' and 'Check Your Progress' section in every unit. 'Activities' will increase your thinking capacity because questions put under 'Activity' section are not directly derived from text. Answers to the short questions have been put under section 'Answers to Check Your Progress'. Besides, a few text-related questions have been put under the section 'Model Questions'. These questions will help to draw your attention on the probable topics for the examination so that you can prepare for the examination with confidence.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION:

This is the first block of the course on 'Traditional Folk Media'. A brief overview of the seven units of the first block has been given below-

Unit 1: TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA

This is the first unit of the course on 'Traditional folk Media'. This unit gives an overview of the concept of traditional folk media, its nature, ways of communicating through traditional folk media and use of traditional media as part of socio-cultural and ritual communication.

Unit 2 : FEATURES OF TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA

'The features of traditional folk media' is the second unit of this particular course. This unit will help you in understanding the different features of traditional folk media along with its advantages and disadvantages. This unit will also discuss as to how folk media makes use of storytelling to reach out to the audience.

Unit 3: TRADITIONAL MEDIA IN INDIA

This unit introduces you to the history and growth of traditional media in India by briefly focusing on some of the traditional folk media forms of India.

Unit 4: TECHNOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS ON TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA

This unit describes what kind of impact electronic media has on traditional folk media. A few success stories of the use of traditional media as a catalyst of social change and development has also been discussed in this particular unit.

Unit 5 : TRADITIONAL MEDIA FOR DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

This unit will throw light on how traditional media serves as a medium for development media and development communication.

Unit 6 : TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA AND INDIAN CULTURE

After going through this unit, you will be able to understand the relation between traditional media and social ethos , the features of folk tradition and the role of folk media as a platform for disseminating information about Indian culture.

Unit 7 : RELEVANCE OF TRADITONAL FOLK MEDIA

This unit will analyse the different traditional folk forms in rural India like folk theatre, folksongs, narrative forms, religious discourse and puppet show. The unit will also talk about impact of traditional folk media on rural development.

UNIT 1 : TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Traditional folk media – an introduction

1.4 Nature of traditional folk media

1.5 Communication through Traditional folk media

1.6 Traditional media as part of socio-cultural and ritual communication

1.7 Let us Sum up

1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.9 Further Reading

1.10 Model Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to :

- explain what is traditional folk media
- analyse the nature of traditional folk media
- discuss how communication takes place through traditional folk media
- explain how traditional media acts as a part of socio-cultural and ritual communication.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of the course on Traditional Folk Media. As the name suggests, this unit is an introductory one which looks into the basics of Traditional Folk Media. In this unit we will discuss the meaning and nature of the term Traditional Folk Media, traditional media as a vehicle of communication and traditional media as part of socio-cultural and ritual communication. Let us begin the unit with a discussion on what traditional media is all about.

1.3 TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA – AN INTRODUCTION

Traditional folk media is a term used to denote 'people's performances'. This term refers to the performing arts which can be described as the cultural symbols of the people.

Traditional folk media is not just confined to dance and music, but it also includes art and crafts. The performing arts and the visual arts include music, song, drama, skits, puppet shows, poetry, speech, sounds, gesture, gossip, jokes, proverbs, painting, certain printed literature, sculpture, handicrafts, costuming, patterning and colouring of material and even the use of head-gear.

Traditional folk media originated as a consequence of people's need to express themselves and the innate urge of human beings to communicate and share something beautiful with their fellowmen in the society. This resulted in progressive impulses getting a coherent shape in the form of creative designs. These performing arts pulsate with life and slowly change through the flux of time. But in spite of the continuous evolution, they continue to be functionally relevant to society.

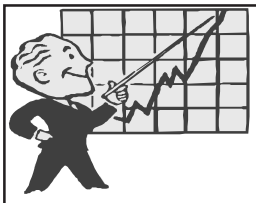
If we look into the meaning of the word 'Tradition', what we get to understand is that it is a process of the passing-on of age-old values to the newer generations and the contextual manifestation and interpretation of the universal. It is not merely some repetitive behavioural pattern or some unchanging symbol or motif in community culture. Rather it is indicative of the assertion of an identity bringing about a revival and regeneration of the life-force of the community. Therefore, traditional folk media rely to a great extent on this cultural support and context.

In India, folk performance is a composite art. It is a total art created by the fusion of elements from music, dance, pantomime, versification, epic ballad recitation, religion and festival peasantry. It absorbs ceremonials, rituals, beliefs and of course the social system.

According to veteran folk media scholar Balwant Gargi, "Folk media represents the people in their natural habitat, with all their contradictions and multifarious activities. It gives a glimpse of their style of speech, music,

dance, dress and wisdom. It contains a rich store of mythological heroes, medieval romances, chivalric tales, social customs, beliefs, and legends. In order to understand the colourful diversity and unity of India, it is important to see the folk theatre in its natural settings."

Rural India is a treasure *trove* of folk art, theatre, music, dance, art and craft. The folk art forms satisfy our innate need for self expression. The traditional forms preserve and disseminate the tradition and culture of our forefathers infusing life into them. Every region has its own folk art form that is immensely popular and relevant in that area and Assam is no exception. Bihu, Lokageet, Borgeet, Bongeet, Sattriya, Bhaona, Lullabies, Ainaam, Ojapali, Bairagi etc. are some of the popular folk forms of Assam. Puppetry and street theatre are also quite popular. Again, there are several types of variations of a single art form. Bhaona, for instance, is a classical form which is performed within strict norms in the naamghars. On the other hand, in parts of lower Assam, there are Dhuliya Bhaona and Khuliya Bhaona which are free from the rigidity of the classical Bhaona and are very flexible. Similarly, the Bihu is performed with slight variations by the Assamese, the Misings, the Bodos, the Karbis etc. The Jatra and Baul of West Bengal, Lavani and Tamasha of Maharashtra, Yakshagana of Karnataka are some of the popular folk forms found in some other states. We will discuss these different folk forms in the consecutive units.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. Define the term traditional folk media.

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Q.2. Traditional folk media is not just confined to dance and music, but also includes. ……

Q. 3. Name some of the popular folk forms of Assam.

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1.4 NATURE OF TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA

We can classify a wide range of human activity and practices under the term traditional folk media. These can include customs, traditions, beliefs and practices embodied in folklore. As forms or channels of communication, they can be defined as 'those verbal, action, aural and visual forms which are known as familiar to the folk, are accepted by them, and are addressed to or performed by and/or for them for the purpose of entertaining, informing, enlightening, instructing and educating'.

As folk creations or expressions, the folk media have more or less distinct or identifiable forms, their own conventions or rules of organizations and their own techniques or methods of presentation. More importantly, these forms contain messages or meanings expressed either directly through music or distinct non-verbal symbols deduced from the totality of the elements in the forms. These messages are understood by the general masses because the meaning is usually derived from the mundane life of the common folk.

When we think about folk media, an image of folk songs, folk poetry, folk dance, puppetry, storytelling, folk plays etc. comes to our mind. Some of the common examples of different forms of folk media the world over are the Chinese Opera, the Indian Yakshagaana, the Indonesian Wayang Kulit and the Philippine Zarzuela. Folk media are still evolving, are dynamic and subject to change and adaptation. They incorporate within their various forms new ideas , new forms, methods and techniques even as they reject those old forms ,ideas and techniques which have ceased to be meaningful or functional to the society they serve. These days, we often see issues like family planning and AIDS awareness being absorbed into the very crux of the social system which, till a few years back was considered as taboo in the Indian society.

The idea of using folk media for the development took its shape in the early 1970s. In 1972 and 1974, UNESCO organized two 'expert meetings' in London and New Delhi in which communication scholars, government bureaucrats and folk media specialists and practitioners met to discuss

how folk media and mass media could be made to use in specific developmental programmes. These two meetings are regarded as the most extensive development meetings to examine the issue of folk media in development process. Thus, traditional folk media have no language, rules or literature, yet they are fostered through oral and functional sources. The nature of traditional folk media is that these forms are personal, familiar, and more credible which makes it easy for people to identify themselves as part of the folk art forms. Traditional folk media are endowed with the channels for expressing socio-ritual, moral and emotional needs of the language-culture groups to which they belong.



LET US KNOW

Chinese Opera : It is a popular form of drama and musical theatre in China with roots going back to the early periods in China. It is a composite performance art that is an amalgamation of various art forms that existed in ancient China, and evolved gradually over more than a thousand years, reaching its mature form in the 13th century during the Song Dynasty.



Sichuan Opera in Chengdu

(Source : https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki File:Sichuan Opera in_Chengdu.jpg)

Wayang Kulit: Wayang Kulit is a type of traditional puppet-shadow play that originated in India and is now performed in Indonesia. It offers a unique combination of ritual, lesson and entertainment. Lacy shadow images are rear-projected on a taut linen screen with a coconut-oil or electric light. The Dalang (shadow artist) manipulates carved leather figures between the lamp and the screen to bring the

shadows to life. Wayang Kulit is often performed during wedding celebrations, especially in Java.



The five Pandava brothers of Mahabharata in the Javanese Wayang Kulit, Indonesia

(Source : Gunawan Kartapranata (2008), https://commons.wikimedia. org/wiki/File:Wayang_Pandawa.jpg)

Philippine Zarzuela : The Philippine zarzuela (also known as sarswela) is a type of drama that originated in Spain, and includes singing and dancing on stage. The lyrics are alternatively spoken and sung in both operatic and popular styles. This type of Philippine theater art and performance reflects the culture and different scenarios of life in the Philippines. The plot of the Philippine Zarzuela is about Filipino life in both positive and negative aspects such as family, politics, feasts, values, corruption of the government etc.

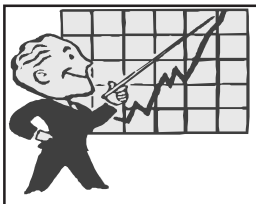


(Source : http://philippinereporter.com/files/2009/12/valentina-casts.jpg)

Yakshagana : Yakshagana is a folk theatre form that combines dance, music, dialogue, costume, make-up, and stage techniques with a unique style and form. This folk theatre style is mainly found in the coastal districts and the Malenadu region of Karnataka, India. Yakshagana is traditionally presented from dusk to dawn.



Rajuks (2010), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yakshaganads.jpg



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.4 : When did the idea of using folk media for the purpose of development take place?

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Q.5 : Are folk media static in nature or are they subject to changes in the society?

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1.5 COMMUNICATION THROUGH TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA

In India, folk cultures abound. This is mainly due to the vast geographic disparities, rural settlements and lack of modern education. Indian society which is rooted in a complex system of family, classes, ethnic groups and clans has a deep association with the folk culture and tradition till date.

As we have already discussed, 'Tradition' which implies customs, habits and way of life is something which has existed in the society ever since the beginning of human civilization and has been transmitted from one generation to another, whether it is through written scriptures or by word of mouth. Folk is indicative of people's participation and spontaneity. Folk culture in a society is generally divided into four different forms:

i. **Oral tradition**: Oral tradition refers to those forms of traditional utterances which are verbal, i,e., spoken, sung and voiced. They include forms like songs, tales, poetry, ballads, anecdotes, rhymes, proverbs and elaborate epics.

ii. **Material culture**: Traditional folk culture, as we have already mentioned earlier, are not merely about performances, but it actually extends to include the very life of the people in its different manifestations. Material culture thereby includes these visible aspects of folk behaviour. It embraces skills, recipes and formulae as displayed in rural arts and crafts, traditional motifs, architectural design, clothes, fashions, farming, fishing and various other types of tools and machinery.

iii. **Social folk customs**: Social folk customs are also aspects of traditional life, but rather than the individual skills and performances, they emphasize activities that involve the group or the community. Large family and community observances that relate to rites of passages such as birth, initiation, marriage and death or annual celebrations, festivals, fairs, ritual and ceremonial gatherings, market occasions and rural meets can be termed as social folk customs.

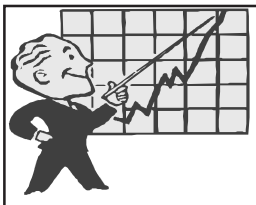
iv. **Performing arts**: Performing arts are those aspects of folk culture which are most colourful and vibrant and which enable other people to identify a particular culture. These consist of traditional music, *masquerades*, dance and drama.

If you now carefully consider the four forms mentioned above, you would observe that among these, the Oral tradition and the Performing arts are the main media of communication. Since the ancient past, storytellers, singers, minstrels and other kinds of folk entertainers have served as means for the transmission and dissemination of news and information through face-to-face communication. And the grounds for these folk performers to receive feedback are family gatherings, social groups and community gatherings. It is through these folk forms that the values, attitudes, beliefs and culture of the people are propagated and passed down the generations.

For instance, folk artists have depicted important issues in the society in the form of satire for curing societal evils. Again, in remote villages and in

tribal communities, the use of oral and functional role of folklore is commonplace. In India the use of folk arts for moral, religious and socio-political purposes has been a known phenomenon. It is important to understand that folk media in India have rarely been used for pure entertainment alone. In fact, these folk media have played the multiple roles of schools of learning, courts of justice and discussion forums. Indeed, each folk form has its distinctive and specific religious, communal, caste wise and linguistic identity and therefore bears values and associations that cannot be ignored. These folk arts therefore serve to preserve and communicate the tradition and culture of our forefathers in the most vibrant and powerful manner. Being relatively inexpensive and easily accessible to the people, it being their own media, the people can identify with these media and hence these media enjoy great popularity in rural areas. Their highly spontaneous, participatory and involving quality makes them the media par excellence for any powerful and effective communication.

Presently, folk media is increasingly being used by different agencies and organisations for development communication – either instead of Mass Media or in conjunction with Mass Media – particularly in rural areas to disseminate different development messages to the people. International agencies like UNESCO, USAID and many Government agencies in India are using Traditional Folk Media. The Song and Drama Division which is a wing of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India is using Traditional Folk Media to a great extent for generating awareness on many issues which are of relevance to the people.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.6 : What do you mean by oral tradition?

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Q.7: Why are folk media more popular than mass media in the rural areas?

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1.6 TRADITIONAL MEDIA AS PART OF SOCIO-CULTURAL AND RITUAL COMMUNICATION

Have you ever come across any festival that has either some performance or games related to it or some traditional motifs and paintings? If you have witnessed such festivities, you will also find that people in villages get together and participate actively in such festivals. Very often separate games and activities are set aside for people from different walks of life-young and old, men, women and children. Participation in such forms of games not only provides relaxation and entertainment but also helps in developing team spirit amongst the people. They are intimate and personal and effective for easy adoption.

Traditional media forms are a part of the way of life of a community and provide acceptable means of bringing development issues into the community on its own terms. In India, they have proven to be successful mass motivators. Our country has made use of traditional media for communicating development messages to the masses specially at the grassroots levels.

Let us analyse how this was done. Traditional performances like ritualistic dances, religious songs and mythology based rural plays which are highly popular, have been used to convey messages on population, health and hygiene to the rural masses. Communicators, therefore, have to test different categories of traditional performances to identify the ones that are flexible enough to absorb development messages to meet the contemporary needs; flexibility is the most important factor. It determines the viability of a traditional medium for rural communication. Cross cultural

communication hurdles are not encountered here. Though these mediums are culture and regional specific, they can communicate the solidarity and friendship with each other through non verbal communication. Such indigenous medium of communication are widely seen not only in India but across different countries of the world. Among the different African societies, 'ritual theatre' is widely prevalent. Ritual theatre invariably requires participation and is a way of communicating information centred on life changes.

Performances and fine arts need no language. Have you observed people engaging in conversation in a market place, exhibition or a social gathering? When people get together at one place, communication flows among them and there is always a possibility of discussion on various issues . A social, ritual or cultural gathering will initiate a discussion and communication begins. A market, festival, ritual, village fair or a celebration are all situations where traditional communication takes place. One does not need a specific medium to express their thoughts. This form of communication sans any stage or actors has the most powerful impact on the people because of the informal nature of conversation.



1.7 LET US SUM UP

- Traditional folk media is a term used to denote 'people's performances'.
- Traditional folk media is not just confined to dance and music, but it also includes art and crafts.
- Traditional folk media originated as a result of people's need to express themselves and the innate urge of human beings to communicate and share something beautiful with their fellowmen in the society.
- In India, folk performance is a composite art. It is a total art created by the fusion of elements from music, dance, pantomime, versification, epic ballad recitation, religion and festival peasantry. It

absorbs ceremonials, rituals, beliefs and of course the social system.

- Rural India is a treasure trove of folk art, theatre, music, dance, art and craft. The folk art forms satisfy our innate need for self expression.
- Bihu, Lokageet, Borgeet, Bongeet, Satriya, Bhaona, Lullabies, Ainaam, Ojhapali, Bairagi etc. are some of the popular folk forms of Assam. Puppetry and street theatre are also quite popular.
- Folk media has several advantages over other conventional media. The most important is the fact that Folk media has a totally different kind of appeal which is not to be found in any mass media.
- Familiarity, Personal contact, Common Language, Intelligibility, Credibility and Acceptance make the folk media universally acceptable among rural folks.
- In India, folk cultures abound. This is mainly due to the vast geographic disparities, rural settlements and lack of modern education. Indian society which is rooted in a complex system of family, classes, ethnic groups and clans has a deep association with the folk culture and tradition till date.
- Folk culture in a society is generally divided into four different forms:
  - Oral tradition
  - Material culture
  - Social folk customs
  - Performing arts
- Of these four forms , the Oral tradition and the Performing Arts are the main media of communication.
- Presently, folk media is increasingly being used by different agencies and organisations for development communication.



1.8 FURTHER READING

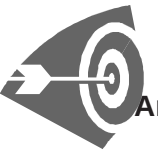
1. Mukhopadhyay, Durgadas (1994). Folk Arts & Social Communication. Publications Division, Government of India
2. Parmar, Shyam (1975).Traditional Folk Media in India**.** Gekha Books

1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Traditional folk media is a term used to denote 'people's performances'. This term refers to the performing arts which can be described as the cultural symbols of the people.

Ans to Q No 2: Art and crafts.

Ans to Q No 3: Some of the popular traditional folk media of Assam are — Ojapali, Mobile theatre, Bhaona, Sattriya dance, Lokageet, Borgeet, Bongeet, Bihu, Mobile theatre, Puppetry etc.



Ans to Q.No 4 : The idea of using folk media for development purposes took its shape in the early 1970s.

Ans to Q.No 5 : Folk media are still evolving, are dynamic and subject to change and adaptation. They incorporate within their various forms new ideas , new forms, methods and techniques even as they reject those old forms ,ideas and techniques which have ceased to be meaningful or functional to the society they serve.

Ans to Q No 6: Oral tradition refers to those forms of traditional utterances which are verbal, i,e., spoken, sung and voiced. They include forms like songs, tales, poetry, ballads, anecdotes, rhymes, proverbs and elaborate epics.

Ans to Q No 7: The folk arts serve to preserve and communicate the tradition and culture of our forefathers in the most vibrant and powerful manner. Being relatively inexpensive and easily accessible to the people, it being their own media, the people can identify with these

media and hence these media enjoy great popularity in rural areas. Their highly spontaneous, participatory and involving quality makes them the media par excellence for any powerful and effective communication.



1.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q.1 : What do you mean by tradition?

Q.2 : Why is folk performance said to be a composite art?

Q.3 : Are there variations within different folk art forms? Give examples.

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1 : What do you mean by Wayang Kulit?

Q.2 : What are the basic features of social folk customs?

Q.3 : Do you consider oral tradition and performing arts as the main media of communication? Why?

C. Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q.1: Explain the significance of traditional folk media in our society.

Q.2: What are the advantages that traditional folk media have over other conventional media?

Q.3: Do you think it is possible to replace Mass Media with Traditional Folk Media? Justify your answer with the help of examples.

Q.4: Discuss how Traditional Folk Media reflects the society, its culture and traditions.

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UNIT 2 : FEATURES OF TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Traditional media as a mass medium

2.4 Features and characteristics of traditional folk media-its advantages and disadvantages

2.5 Storytelling as the core of traditional media

2.6 Let us Sum up

2.7 Further Reading

2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.9 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to :

- explain how traditional folk media acts as a medium of mass communication
- describe the features and characteristics of traditional folk media
- discuss how storytelling takes place through traditional folk media.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the second unit of the course on Traditional Folk Media. As the name implies, this unit is an introduction to the different features of Traditional Folk Media. In this unit we will look into how traditional folk media functions as a mass medium and also discuss how storytelling functions as the core of traditional media.

So, let us begin the unit with a discussion on what is Traditional Media.

2.3 TRADITIONAL MEDIA AS A MASS MEDIUM

Traditional media are conventional means of mass communication that exist in every culture. They are a part and parcel of every society. Folk forms are rooted in our culture and are a resultant of people's desire and need to express themselves. Folk forms originate in our culture, belief and value system. They are indispensible. Perhaps, this uniqueness about traditional media is what makes them irreplaceable by any other modern forms of media.

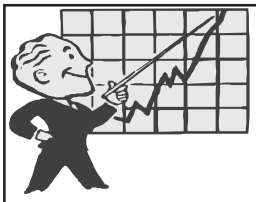
Traditional media as a mass medium has an unusual way of communicating with people. Rarely have they been used for pure entertainment purpose alone. They have always been used for religious, moral and socio-political purposes. Unlike modern mass mediums, traditional media are more familiar, personal and credible. They are marked by spontaneity with humorous undertones.

As a mass medium, traditional media are effective because they originate from the people and therefore are close to people's hearts. Perhaps this is the reason why in spite of advances made in information technology, folk forms are regarded as valuable to the society. Traditional mediums can intimately connect with the masses and thus can be used as a tool of communication. The use of folk media for communication is particularly relevant in areas where people have limited or no access to modern mass media

In India, we get to see that both government and non-government organizations are using traditional folk media to trickle down messages that are important and relevant to the people. Traditional media has come to be used as development media. The close contact between the sender and receiver in folk media makes it more credible and acceptable. It also overcomes the illiteracy barriers prevalent in the society through use of language familiar to the audience.

Traditional media as a mass medium plays a crucial role in the society. Folk media are flexible, appealing and embedded in one's own culture and value system. Flexibility allows accommodation of new concepts and

themes. Unlike other mass mediums, folk media is not dependent on modern technology. They appeal to the emotions rather than the intellect. Traditional media plays a significant role in the process of socio-economic development of a society. It can convince and influence people in a very effective manner.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What makes traditional media an effective medium of communication?

_____

_____

_____

2.4 FEATURES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA- ITS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

2.4 1 Characteristics of traditional folk media

Now that you know what traditional media is, let us look into its features and characteristics. Every medium is characterized by certain unique attributes. Traditional media is no exception to this. They display the same characteristics even though they vary from community to community. The key characteristics of traditional media are listed below.

i. **Indigenous in nature**: Traditional folk media are indigenous in nature. They originate in a particular community and are transmitted from generation to generation mostly through oral means.

ii. **Intimate**: Traditional media are people's way of expressing themselves. They are rooted to the cultural fabric of the society and hence serve as intimate and personal mediums of self

expression. It is perhaps this intimacy that makes rapport building through folk media quick and easy.

iii. **Spontaneous**: Another key characteristic of traditional media is its spontaneity. They are natural and instinctive.

iv. **Flexible**: It is perhaps flexibility that has made traditional media survive the onslaught of time and advances in information technology. Traditional media are flexible and can be adapted to suit the changing times.

v. **No language barrier**: Traditional folk media are performed in languages that are specific to the community. This makes it easy for the community to comprehend and feel connected to it.

vi. **Participatory**: One characteristic that gives edge to folk media over other forms is its participatory nature. People can identify with it and participate in it without requiring any particular skill set.

2.4.2 Advantages of traditional folk media

Traditional media are rooted in the traditions and culture of a society. They are an integral part of one's culture and heritage. Folk media has several advantages over other conventional media. Let us discuss them. Now let us glance over the advantages of these forms of media over the conventional mass media.

i. **Intimate medium :** We know that every community or ethnic group of society has its own folk and traditional media which are close to their hearts. This is because it is in their person or simply speaking it runs in their blood. Hence, whenever it is performed or enacted by anyone in a society or place most of the masses feel like joining it and closely enjoy it to the maximum.

ii. **It is physically very close to the people:** You must have seen that most of the folk and traditional media are performed in close proximity of the public gathering. Those of you from Assam and others who live here will know that *bihu* dances are performed in close proximity with the peoples' gathering. Thus, its effect on the masses is much greater than that of mass media.

iii. **It is a personal media:** While reading about the characteristics of communication as well as mass communication you must have found that the latter is a highly 'impersonal' medium. This is because the communicator is communicating with the masses through a mechanical device or medium. That is why the effects of the personal warmth which is found in folk and traditional media are lacking in mass media. This is true for TV, radio, newspaper or a magazine etc. That personal charisma which can move the masses is absent in mass media.

iv. **Scope for repeat performances:** In traditional folk media there is ample scope for repeating a performance for the masses who like it. And the audiences can also take part in it by becoming a part of the performing team. This scope is not there in mass media where programmes are broadcast only once and simultaneously. In other words it means that in folk and traditional media programmes and events can be repeatedly performed if people liked them. But in case of mass media this is not possible as programmes are broadcast at the same time for a wide variety of people across a huge area.

v. **Regional / local level variations are important:** We can see that folk and traditional media performances can be carried out with adequate scope for some amount of regional or local variations in different places of the country. For example, *bihu* performances in some areas of Sivasagar district will be somewhat different from the performances in Dibrugarh or Golaghat or Jorhat districts. Same is the case with other forms of folk and traditional media also. However, in case of mass media the same kind of performance has to be watched or listened to by the people everywhere with hardly any scope for regional or local variations.

vi. **Scope for using body language or non verbal language is adequately available in folk and traditional media:** You must have realized the importance of non verbal language in the field

of communication. In folk and traditional media non verbal or body language plays a vitally-important role in enhancing the meaning of the messages being exchanged among the participants. So, the scope for using voice modulations, facial gestures, overall body movement etc. all these aspects make these two types of media much more effective than mass media where this scope is far less. Of course, you can say that TV, films and documentaries do have this scope in a good measure. But this can't be equal to that of a live performance by any person in regard to effectiveness. Besides, you can realize on your own that compared to this aspect, print media is a highly stale one in case of sending across the meanings of its information and messages. That is, even though exclamation signs are used in written languages, yet it does not carry the same kind of emotional strength and effect which one can get in case of radio and TV due to voice modulation.

vii. **Use of local language, costumes etc:** Every type of folk and traditional media has to be essentially based upon the local ethos, culture and other aspects. Thus the costumes, language used and the settings and background etc. must invariably bear the stamp of that locality and general culture of the area. Otherwise it will not be able to carry the same effect and meaning for the masses.

viii. **It is performance oriented:** Another important point to be noted in this regard is that most of the folk and traditional media are basically performance-oriented. In simple words it signifies that majority of these two media are a finely-balanced combinations of performance of music and dances. This aspect provides much more effectiveness over its target audiences.

ix. **Low cost**: Compared to the huge investments other medium such as print and electronic media demands, folk media has the advantage of being a low-cost medium. It doesn't require massive budgets and can be used at a negligible cost. No high-

end equipments or sets are required for a folk performance. Also, since it doesn't involve huge costs, they can be repeated as per need.

x. **Audience participation**: Another advantage that makes traditional media stand out is the scope for audience participation. Unlike other conventional media forms where the audiences are treated as passive receivers, folk media involves the participation of people. They are open, flexible and capacitate audience involvement.

xi. **Self-expression**: Being a people's medium, traditional media satisfies the need for self-expression.

xii. **Entertainment value**: Folk media are high on entertainment value. They disseminate traditions and culture in a manner that is lively, catchy and engrossing. They can be used for solely entertainment purpose and for infotainment and edutainment as well.

xiii. **Immediate and direct feedback**: Traditional media are 'people's performances' that are performed in front of a live audience. Unlike print and electronic media that is characterized by delayed feedback, it is immediate and direct in traditional media. Audience reaction and response can be garnered immediately after the performance.

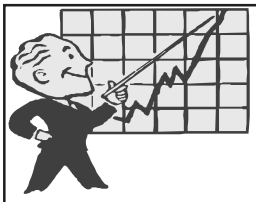
Now, due to all these factors folk and traditional media enjoy a far more effectiveness and influence over the masses of whom they are a part of.

2.4.3 Disadvantages of folk media

In the previous part, we have discussed about the advantages of traditional media. Now let us dwell on some of its disadvantages.

i. **Limited Reach**: Compared to modern mass mediums such as radio and television that reach out to millions of people at one time, traditional media is characterized by limited reach.

ii. Caters to limited audience: As stated above, traditional media has limited reach. It cannot cater to more than a few hundreds of people at a time. It is at best a localized medium.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.2: Why is traditional folk media said to be intimate medium of communication?

_____

_____

Q.3: Do traditional folk media generate immediate feedback?

_____

_____

Q.4: What do you mean when we say that traditional folk media is 'flexible and repeatable'?

_____

_____



LET US KNOW

Differences between Folk Media and Electronic Media

Component	Folk media	Electronic media
Investment (Finance)	Negligible	Very high
Power	Not Essential	Essential
Receiver sets	Not required	Essential
Maintenance	None	Essential
Technical problems	None	Often
Interpreter	Not Essential	Preferable
Familiarity	Familiar	Familiar
Personal contact	Always	None
Language problems	None	Possible
Credibility factor	Very high	Lower
Audience participation	Very high	Seldom

Flexibility	Very high	Very high
Adult education	More effective	Less so
Repeatability	Easy	Difficult
Reactions	Can be gauged on the spot	Cannot be
Reach	Very wide	Restricted
Attentiveness	On the theme	Can be clouded by novelty
Intelligibility	Very high	Not comparable
Understanding	Universal	Isolated
Acceptance	Universal	Universal
Overall effectiveness	Very high	Not comparable
Programme designing	Easier	More difficult

(Source: Folk Arts as Mass Communication Media – CS Sreekumar)

2.5 STORYTELLING AS THE CORE OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Conveying stories or events in written or oral format is referred to as storytelling. It is an interactive process of engaging listeners through the use of words and actions to tell a story. Storytelling is a form of human expression that has existed since the beginning of human civilization. It is an ancient art form. Stories have been an intrinsic part of every culture and have been used to inform, entertain, educate, instill cultural and moral values and transmit folk traditions from one generation to another.

It is storytelling that defines the success of a medium, be it traditional media or conventional mass media. The mass media are a logical extension of storytelling because at their most basic level, they present knowledge and information about the political, social, scientific and economic trends and events of a community. Storytelling is one of the oldest art forms that have evolved with time. The way in which the conventional mass media such as radio, television and internet convey news, events and information is nothing but a form of modern storytelling. It provides a means to document the news, history, character and identity of a community. Storytelling have been used extensively adopted not only by the traditional media but also by

the modern media by incorporating technological innovations, including interactive multimedia, digital technologies, animated content and computer-generated images. However modern technologies have in some way diluted the old and traditional modes of oral communication with interactive storytelling and visualization .

Storytelling is the core and a prime constituent of traditional media. Traditional media is characterized by interactive, informal and spontaneous storytelling that is easy to understand and appeals to the emotions of the audience. It is this distinct form of storytelling that sets apart traditional media from modern mass media.

Storytelling is an effective way of communicating with people and it teaches moral values. Stories make it easier for people to identify with the character and remember the moral of the story. It is an entertaining way of reaching to children as well as adults.

Different forms of traditional storytelling can be seen in different parts of the world. In China, **Shuochang** (literal meaning is “speak and sing”) is a form of traditional Chinese storytelling (or, more properly, “story-singing”), with many regional subgenres. *Shuochang* performances usually intermix speaking and singing, and are accompanied by percussion instruments and sometimes also plucked or bowed string instruments. Local storytelling traditions that are still alive in China in oral transmission are traceable to the sixteenth century. The spectrum ranges from truly sophisticated art forms such as Suzhou story singing (Suzhou tanci), Yangzhou storytelling (Yangzhou pinghua) and southern love balladry (Nanguan) to all kinds of lesser known forms: rural or urban, professional or amateur, with or without music, rough or refined. Some genres are sung



Shuochang
Source : http://www.shuoshu.org (Chinese Storytelling/Professional_Storytelling/performed%20narrative%20arts.shtml)

throughout, many alternate between singing and speech, or rely on speech altogether. The concept of shuochang – shuo 'tell', chang 'sing' – is broad in the sense that it includes professional, semi-professional and non-professional forms of verbal art, and embraces full-fledged artistic performance traditions along with ballad-singing, folksongs, nursery rhymes, jingles and ditties of all kinds. The sung genres are often accompanied with musical instruments. The most commonly used instruments are lutes, fiddles, drums, clappers, gongs and cymbals. The narrative content draws on everlasting historical, religious and spiritual themes, and ranges from classical tales about love, betrayal and heroism to ghost stories, gossip, local news, political commentary and commercial advertising. *Shuochang* is most often performed by a solo male or female singer, although it may also be performed by two singers. The singers may provide their own accompaniment with hand-held percussion such as clappers or a small drum, or there may also be a small ensemble of one or two musicians.

In India also, there are different techniques of storytelling. Each region has developed its own style and tradition of storytelling in local languages. Epics and puranas, ancient stories of wisdom in Sanskrit, are the common story material for all or most of the regions of India. Such performances are held in temples, weddings and other religious or social functions. These are one-person performances, where the performer has to be versatile in the aspects of exposition and be able to interestingly narrate humorous anecdotes. The storyteller is looked upon as a teacher who is a scholar in ancient texts in Sanskrit and other vernaculars. They interpret the religious and mythological texts of the past to the present and future generations.

South India has a long tradition of storytelling and religious discourse. **Burrakatha** is an oral storytelling technique in the Katha tradition, performed in villages of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The troupe consists of one main performer and two co-performers. Burrakatha, a narrative story, is an integrated form of spoken word (dialogue), music, drama and dance and the stories are usually centred around Hindu mythology or a contemporary social issue.



Folk performers performing Burrakatha
Source : Debnath , Sukanto (2007)(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:India_village_musicians.jpg)

Pravachan, Patakam, Upanyasam, Harikatha, Kalakshepa, Harikeerthan, Villupattu are all similar in the sense they are interpretations and storytelling on religious theme, yet they have different styles. In Andhra Pradesh, there is a storytelling form that is called *Kathakalakshepa. It is a Sanskrit term that means spending time listening to stories. This performance is held in temples, weddings, family events and other social and religious functions. Harikatha and harikeertan are also forms of storytelling that narrate stories from epics and puranas. Harikatha is a composite art form which includes thematic stories, narrations, histrionics, music , dance and philosophical doctrines. Villu pattu is another storytelling folk style prevalent in South Kerala and Kanyakumari district and in Thovalai of Tamil Nadu. The villu is a bow that is struck while narrating the story. It is also called the bow song.*

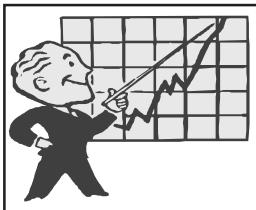


Villu pattu

Ezhava/Channar Musicians from the 19th century: Performing the traditional *Villadichaampattu*

Source:Aaroamal(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Channaar_Musicians_19th_century.jpg)

Different folk forms blend the concept of storytelling to talk on a range of issues. As of today, the art of storytelling has progressed to the point where it is today a strategic tool for communicators who have used strategies for sending the right message at the right time to the right people and through the right channel.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: What do you mean by storytelling?

_____

_____

Q.6: What is Burrakatha?

_____

_____



2.6 LET US SUM UP

Let us summarize the unit by highlighting on the following important points-

- Traditional media are conventional means of mass communication that exist in every culture.
- Folk media are flexible, appealing and embedded in one's own culture and value system.
- Traditional media are people's way of expressing themselves. They are rooted in the cultural fabric of the society and hence serve as intimate and personal mediums of self expression.
- Conveying stories or events in written or oral format is referred to as storytelling.
- The mass media are a logical extension of storytelling because at their most basic level, they present knowledge and information about the political, social, scientific and economic trends and events of a community.

- Shuochang (literal meaning is “speak and sing”) is a form of traditional Chinese storytelling (or, more properly, “story-singing”), with many regional subgenres.
- Burrakatha is an oral storytelling technique in the Katha tradition, performed in villages of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- Villu pattu is another storytelling folk style prevalent in South Kerala and Kanyakumari district and in Thovalai of Tamil Nadu.



2.7 FURTHER READING

1. Kumar, Keval J (2012). Mass Communication in India.Mumbai : Jaico Publishing House
2. Mukhopadhyay, Durgadas (1994). Folk Arts & Social Communication. Publications Division, Government of India
3. Parmar, Shyam (1975).Traditional Folk Media in India**.** Gekha Books

2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q.No 1 : Traditional media are conventional means of mass communication that exist in every culture. They are a part and parcel of every society. Traditional media as a mass medium has an unusual way of communicating with people. Rarely have they been used for pure entertainment purpose alone. They have always been used for religious, moral and socio-political purposes. Unlike modern mass mediums, traditional media are more familiar, personal and credible. They are marked by spontaneity with humorous undertones.

As a mass medium, traditional media are effective because they originate from the people and therefore are close to people’s hearts. Perhaps this is the reason why in spite of advances made in information technology, folk forms are regarded as valuable to the society. Traditional mediums can intimately connect with the masses

and thus can be used as a tool of communication. The use of folk media for communication is particularly relevant in areas where people have limited or no access to modern mass media.

Ans to Q.No 2 : Traditional media are people's way of expressing themselves. They are rooted to the cultural fabric of the society and hence serve as intimate and personal mediums of self expression.

Ans to Q.No 3 : Traditional media are 'people's performances' that are performed in front of a live audience. Unlike print and electronic media that is characterized by delayed feedback, it is immediate and direct in traditional media. Audience reaction and response can be garnered immediately after the performance.

Ans to Q.No 4 : When we say that traditional folk media is flexible we mean that it is possible to accommodate new themes in them. Repeatability means that it is possible to repeat a message several times. Traditional media is comparatively less expensive than mass media; therefore it becomes possible to repeat a message several times.

Ans to Q.No 5 : Conveying stories or events in written or oral format is referred to as storytelling. It is an interactive process of engaging listeners through the use of words and actions to tell a story.

Storytelling is one of the oldest art forms that have evolved with time. The way in which the conventional mass media such as radio, television and internet convey news, events and information is nothing but a form of modern storytelling. It provides a means to document the news, history, character and identity of a community. Storytelling have been used extensively adopted not only by the traditional media but also by the modern media by incorporating technological innovations, including interactive multimedia, digital technologies, animated content and computer-generated images.

Storytelling is an effective way of communicating with people and it teaches moral values. Stories make it easier for people to identify with the character and remember the moral of the story. It is an entertaining way of reaching to children as well as adults.

Ans to Q.No 6 : Burrakatha is an oral storytelling technique in the Katha tradition, performed in villages of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The troupe consists of one main performer and two co-performers. Burrakatha, a narrative story, is an integrated form of spoken word (dialogue), music, drama and dance and the stories are usually centred around Hindu mythology or a contemporary social issue.



2.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions.

Q.1 : Do you consider folk media to be a composite art form?

Q.2: How does traditional folk media serve as a medium of mass communication?

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1 : What is folk media? What are its disadvantages?

Q.2 : Do you think a surge in the growth of electronic media have had a massive impact on traditional folk media? Explain.

C. Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q.1 : How does storytelling form the core of traditional folk media? Justify your answer with the help of examples.

Q.2 : Discuss how traditional folk media reflects the society, its culture and traditions.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 3 : TRADITIONAL MEDIA IN INDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objective

3.2 Introduction

3.3 History and growth of traditional media in India

3.3.1 A brief overview of some of the traditional folk media forms of India

3.4 Applications of traditional media for development purposes

3.5 Let us Sum up

3.6 Further Reading

3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.8 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

As you go through this unit you will be able to :

- describe the history and growth of Traditional media in India
- understand how traditional folk media grew in Assam.
- analyse the impact of electronic media on traditional media.
- describe how traditional media is being used for development purposes.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

Each culture has its own traditions, which are passed on from generation to generation. Earlier, there was no provision of electricity or technology, and hence there was no radio or television or internet services for entertainment or information. Have you ever wondered how the messages were communicated before the development of writing techniques? Even after the writing was developed, it was not learned or utilized by the common people, reading and writing was mostly limited to the upper strata of the society. So, the common folks adopted various other ways of communication in the form of songs, dances, music, drama, stories, poetry, proverbs, paintings, sculpture, handicrafts, puppet-shows, and so

on. The stories which could not be documented were spread through these media. Even during these days, there are many villages, where proper electricity facilities are not developed. In these situations, people develop their own ways of communication depending upon the local language and culture. Do you remember hearing stories of Mahabharata and Ramayana or other moral tales from your grandparents or parents? Have you ever enjoyed a live performance of drama in your village? Information in this way has been handed over from one generation to another and constitutes different forms of traditional media. Traditional media is an integral part of Indian culture as it reflects the Indian way of life, its values and aspirations. This chapter will take you through a journey of history and growth of traditional media and its use in the country's development.

3.3 HISTORY AND GROWTH OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA IN INDIA

The folk or traditional arts of India go back to the ancient times when people began to understand the value of civilization and organized living. Folk art was born out of need for entertainment, for satisfying creative urge, to express and to remain united as a society. According to MacBride Commission report of 1982 known as *Many voices, One World ,* communication became institutionalized in traditional societies. Interpersonal communication and public institutional communication in the form of transmission of norms and customs grew and professional categories of people in course of time came to be responsible for the transmission of certain types of messages. They included bands, sorcerers, tribal chiefs, travelling merchants, local administrators, dancers, scribes and so on. Preachers, pilgrims, traders, craftsmen facilitated and helped in disseminating news and promote the exchange and interaction of religions, cultures, crafts and fine arts. Religious leaders like Buddha, Mahavira and Shankaracharya made use of kathas, devotional songs, epics and recitations to disseminate their messages.

In India, folk traditions grew parallel across the country in various forms catering to the needs and aspirations of each region, giving creative

satisfaction and simple joys to the people. The traditional media grew in the form of theatre, dance, music, songs, ballads, handicraft, fine art, puppetry, legends and folktales, along with religious discourses. According to Malhan (1985), these different forms of traditional media can be –

- Action-oriented folk arts and verbal musical forms like rural theatre, puppetry, discourses and kathas, folk songs, ballads, storytelling and poetic symposia;
- Audience situations like festivals and fairs, social, ritual and ceremonial gatherings and meets;
- Opinion leaders like village heads etc. ,and
- Rural arts and crafts, traditional designs and miscellaneous motifs.

Having its roots in native culture, these forms of traditional media provide mass entertainment and serve as indigenous tools of interpersonal and inter-group communication especially in the rural areas. In due course of time, different regions developed specialized regional folk media like Tamasha of Maharashtra, Jatra of Bengal and Yakshagana of Karnataka which acted as communication channels for heralding reform, social changes and development in the Indian society.

The forms that have been used for social, cultural, religious and political purposes, apart from pure entertainment since the beginning, have also played platform for public discussions, been schools of learning and also courts of justice in some ways. No matter what strata of society, or religious background, age group and gender or what educational level one belongs to, folk media touches the hearts of all and manages to create a sense of identity and belongingness.

Traditional media is a beautiful array of dance, music, songs, prayer, clowning, moral lessons, epic and mythology. Use of familiar languages and dialects, ethnic costumes, relevant themes and performance in informal settings, with humour and emotions playing alike, here a rapport with audiences is built immediately.

Senior Folk media scholar Balwant Garghi has rightly defined traditional folk media as:

"Folk media represents the people in their natural habitat with all their contradictions and multifarious activities. It gives a glimpse of their style of speech, music, dance, dress and wisdom. It contains a rich store of mythological heroes, medieval romances, chivalric tales, social customs and beliefs, and unity of India. It is important to see folk theater in its natural settings."

3.3.1 A brief overview of some of the traditional folk media forms of India

i. **Folk theatre** : Folk theatre is a composite form in all regions, combining dance, music, art, dialogues, poetry and even folklore. In some places, the themes taken from mythology, or folk tales, legends or current issues, sometimes give social messages and sometimes satirize contemporary scenario.

In the north, Nautanki and Ramlila are popular, in Eastern India Jatra and in India's Northeast Ankiya Nat of Assam, while in West Tamasha, and Bhavai are popular. All these are spontaneous and informal. The Ankiya Nat of Assam, Ramlila of Northern India, Yakshagana of Karnataka all have mythological themes, making them a combination of folk and classical art, yet, their ability to involve the masses is high.



Fig: Bhaona
Bhaona (Source : Dipankar Chetia : https://commons.wikimedia. org/wiki/File: Bhaona.jpg)

Bhaona or Ankiya Nat is usually performed in Naam Ghars (Places of Worship). The themes are associated with Lord Krishna and other incarnations of Lord Vishnu where episodes from Ramayana and Mahabharata are common. The Sutradhar plays a crucial role in taking the story forward. While in North, Ramlila revolves around Lord Rama and the Ramayana. These are performed mostly during Dussera festival.

Yakshagana draws its themes from Bhagawata and has been popular in Karnataka since the sixteenth century. It is full of songs and verses giving a local flavour to messages from the Bhagawata. Similarly, the Dashsavatar is an enactment of ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu and popular in the Konkan region.

Bhavai in Gujarat is also centuries old and began as a common man's theatre to stand against the caste system and social evils. It begins with invocation to Goddess Amba. The clown Ranglo gives narrations in between and also generates humour. In Tamasha again, issues taken, are contemporary and lots of pun is involved. Play begins with invocation to lord Ganesha. The themes remain secular and contemporary issues are explored. The folk dance Lavani is used in between adding energy to the show. It throws moral questions to the audiences as well.



Fig: Bhavai

Bhavai
(Source : Suyash Dwivedi , https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bhavai_Gujrat_(2).jpg)

Nautanki is performed in North India in open stages and draws narratives from epics and folklore and heroic tales and are used to make social and political comments. On the other hand Jatra, popular in Bengal, Odisha and Assam got its name from the nomadic nature of the performers who travel from place to place giving performances. This form got popular among the communists to spread social messages in pre independent and newly independent India.



Fig: Lavani

Therukoothu is a special folk theatre form of Tamil Nadu, mainly street play. This includes in it puppetry, Puravi attam (Horse dance), Nizhal Attam (Shadow dance) and Villupattu.

ii. Folk songs *:* India has tremendous amount of folk singing styles. According to Professor Shyam Parmar(1975), Indian folk songs can be divided into the following-

- bhakti songs, devotional songs with strong links to classical music
- ceremonial songs including seasonal, ritual work and love songs ; and
- tribal songs.



Jatra Folk Drama

Some of the popular folk songs of India which have been used as a medium of communication include Baul and Bhatiali of Bengal, Duha,Ras and Garba of Gujarat, Bihu of Assam, Ghumar and Panihari of Rajasthan,Chaiti and Kajari of Uttar Pradesh and Heer, Jugnu and Gidha of Punjab. These different styles of

folksongs express socially significant messages and have been used to foster a sense of national pride and integration.

iii. **Narrative forms :** Poetic forms with a string narrative element have proved to be particularly useful from the point of view of communication of messages.

Ballads like Ulha in Uttra Pradesh, Powada in Maharashtra or Gee Gee in Karnataka, Villupattu in Tamil Nadu and Kavigaan in West Bengal, Burrakatha of Andhra Pradesh and Dasakathia of Odisha, also convey social messages. The strong narratives in these are enhanced with dramatization.

iv. **Religious discourses**

Religious discourse or Harikatha, known by different names like Katha, Kirtan, Katha-Kalakshepam and Pravachan involve a kind of dramatic exposition of stories and songs. Usually in such types of religious discourses , the performer or kathakar is expected to have knowledge of the scriptures, music ,qualities of a good actor as well as an intimate knowledge of local customs. During the performance, a kathakar stops at various points during the recitation to make points, to draw analogies and offer examples. The improvised portion or Drashant can be very easily utilized to convey the desired message to the common masses.

v. **Folk dances :** Music and dance in India are among the oldest forms of classical arts with a tradition that dates back to several centuries. These traditions are fundamentally similar but they have different names and are also performed in different styles. Dance puts the rhythm and movement in the play and continuously captures audience attention.

Folk dances and folk songs like Gidha or Bhangra of Punjab, Bihu and Lokageet of Assam, Dadaria of Madhya Pradesh, Rouf of Kashmir, Ghumar and Maad of Rajasthan, Kajaria of Uttar Pradesh, Kilkali Pattu of Kerela, Garba of Gujarat, Baul, Bhatiali of Bengal, Mado of Goa and more are all very popular among the locals in the respective regions.

vi. **Traditional motifs and symbols :** Have you ever seen patterns of rangoli made out of coloured powder outside homes on festive occasions ? These are nothing but symbols which are a part of everyday life. These beautiful patterns which are made on the threshold of the house are believed to uplift the spirit, ward off evil energies and give protection. In India, people revere many symbols, ranging from those which are simple to the most complex ones. Indians believe in symbols which are entirely different from the rest of the world, though traces of similarities can be seen. The symbols in India are the outcomes of mythology, religious beliefs, traditions and philosophy. India is a country of motifs and symbols where traditional art forms, figures and ritual drawings have existed for many centuries. These art forms include symbols, floor motifs, folk murals, traditional textile designs, scroll paintings etc.



Fig: Tanjore Painting

vii. **Paintings :** Paintings also serve as one of the important mediums of traditional media by highlighting certain important social issues. Primitive men used this medium to communicate with each other by drawing on walls of the caves depicting hunting of different animals, men folk working etc . Throughout different periods of history, we find a definite established tradition of painting on various objects, particularly on intimate objects of everyday use, floors and walls and in almost every instance, the depiction being associated with some ritual.


Fig: Madhubani Painting

Let us look at some of the examples of traditional paintings which symbolizes deep meaning. Traditional paintings of Madhya Pradesh, specially the wall paintings of Bundelkhand, Chhattisgarh, Gondwana, Nimar and Malwa are living expressions of people, closely linked with the socio-cultural environment of the area. They are not mere decorations but also expressions of religious devotion. Let us try and understand some of the examples.



Fig: Pithora

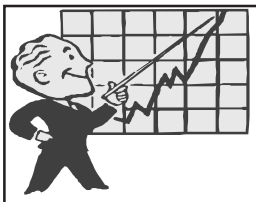
The Bhils and Bhilala tribes of Madhya Pradesh paint myths related to creation called pithora paintings. Horses, elephants, tigers, birds, gods, men and objects of daily life are painted in bright multicoloured hues. In the Gondwana region, unmatched creative vision has been shown by the Gond and the Pardhan tribes who have impressed audiences at exhibitions in Japan, France, Australia and other countries. The Malwa, Nimar and Tanwarghar regions of Madhya Pradesh are known for their mandana wall and floor painting traditions. Red clay and cow dung mixture is used as base material to plaster the surface against which white drawings stand out in contrast. Peacocks, cats, lions, goojari, bawari, swastik and chowk are some motifs of this style.



Fig: Madana wall and floor painting

viii. **Puppetry** remains one of the most unique and still very popular form of folk media in different parts of India. Among all age groups it successfully entertains and also conveys social messages. Generally in India there are three types. String puppets are made in some states, Rod puppets in some areas, while glove puppets in others. The artist could be either a single man performing shows, a group of artists or a family of artists performing in different places using colourful puppets. The themes also differ as per the region and traditions.

With the growth of traditional media across the country, cultural consciousness among Indian masses has seen significant rise, as every festival and celebration in rural and semi urban areas involves some kind of folk performance even today.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Who said that folk media represents people in their natural habitat?

_____

_____

Q.2: Which form of traditional media is considered composite ? Why?

_____

_____

Q.3: Into how many categories can Indian folk songs be categorized?

_____

_____

3.4 APPLICATION OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA FOR DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES

Development through communication media is happening all over the developing world and use of folk media comes handy in agriculture based economies like India, where majority of population resides in villages and semi urban areas.

Public and private organizations make use of traditional folk forms for development purposes. The largest public body involved in such activities since 1954 is 'Song and Drama Division' under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in different states. This division sponsors a large number of departmental troupes and private troupes for organizing programmes that includes folk plays, poetry recitation (Kavi Sammelan, Mushaira, Kavi Darbar), folk recitals like Qawalis, Pall, Villupattu, puppet shows, religious discourses, folk songs and folk dances. The Song and Drama Division of the Government of India makes wide use of puppets in its campaigns to promote various government projects, and Life Insurance Corporation of India used puppets to educate the rural masses about life insurance, enlisting the help of the Literacy House in Lucknow.

With assigned cultural troupes and folk and theatre artists, the division carries folk performances like plays, street theatre, puppetry, ballads and other area specific folk forms to disseminate social and developmental messages in villages, like family planning, savings, alcoholism, domestic violence, patriotism, environmental causes or simply to eradicate superstitions, and patriotic messages in remote border areas. It has more than seventy official troupes across India carrying its goals forward. While, the private organizations using traditional media for development activities has 'Social Action Groups'.

Development in India is majorly concerned with developing of rural setup and a better life for those who live there. A farmer who works in the fields the whole day, or a tea garden worker who toils in the sun the whole day, or a village woman who not only does all the house chores and feeds the domestic animals, but also (in many regions) goes far to fetch drinking water, all such people might never feel interested in a lecture or a television documentary directly conveying some social message.

They need to relax and need entertainment even if it aims to educate or inform. In such cases the traditional media is always appealing.

The importance of traditional media was felt as independent India saw the making of Five year plans. But an important turning point in utilizing traditional media for developmental works came, when in 1972, UNESCO and International Planned Parenthood Federation organized a series of meetings in London, and stress was laid on integrated use of traditional and mass media for spreading awareness on family planning.

The MacBride Commission, which was set up by UNESCO for study of communication problems internationally in 1977, in its report titled 'One World-Many Voices' in 1980, also recommended use of traditional media even in the times of modern mass media. The report suggests:

"Even when modern media have penetrated to isolated areas, the older forms maintain their validity, particularly when used to influence attitudes, instigate action and promote change. Extensive experience has shown that traditional forms of communication can be effective in dispelling the superstitions, archaic perceptions and unscientific views that people

have inherited as part of traditions and which are difficult to modify if the benefits of change are hard to demonstrate. Practitioners of the traditional media use a subtle form of persuasion by presenting the required message in locally popular artistic forms. This cannot be rivaled by any other means of communication."

3.4.1 Some examples of development practices through traditional media:

Street theatre is a very popular media to educate and inform. The formal origins of Indian street theatre can be traced to the radical political theatre in the 'forties of Calcutta'. It emerged not from folk or traditional theatre form but rather from the tradition of Indian adaptations of Western proscenium theatre which were popular at the time in urban centres. The main groups involved in this type of popular theatre activity are 'social action groups (SAGs)' ,health and agricultural extension workers, student activists ,political parties, religious reformers and women's organizations. Organisations like NRHM, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and NGOs like Bachpan Bachao Andolan have been using this medium to create awareness among, villagers, slum dwellers and others on issues like health and hygiene or HIV/AIDS, educating the girl child or curbing child trafficking respectively.

The form is also used to create political awareness or for environmental issues. In 1985, folk arts played a crucial role in saving the Western Ghats from exploitation. A very important role was played by folk songs to promote the Chipko Andolan in Uttarakhand. The movement involved villagers of the Mandal village who not only sang folk songs to mobilize people but also hug trees in forests to save them from being cut down.

The Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) also contributed towards disseminating information regarding developmental issues by performing plays all across India. The Bengal Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) troupe during

the Bengal famine (1943) travelled all over India performing a play exposing hoarders and black-marketers and launching a campaign to save food.

Not long ago, Heart Care Foundation of India in New Delhi took the initiative to use folk media to run campaigns across rural India to educate people on healthy nutritious eating habits.

Senior academician Dr. Harish Kumar in one of his papers for 'Indian Media Studies Journal' observed:

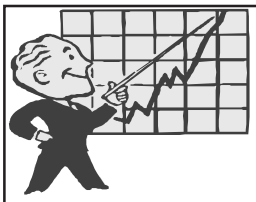
Folk media is important for development purpose stating , "The folk performing art is changing its structure continuously over centuries, modifying itself to the needs of the changing situation making it functionally relevant to society. Tradition is the process of transmission of age – values and the contextual manifestation and interpretation of the universal."

Tamil Poet Subramanyam Bharati used **folk songs** to generate patriotism and awareness on Swadeshi movement. Baul in West Bengal or Borgeet and Lokageet in Assam, have served both social as well as religious purposes.

In fact All India Radio has for long used folk music or other oral forms to help the farmer and village community develop it methods of farming and enhance standard of living. Similarly, Indian Television has used some folk forms very effectively for development purpose.

The Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) in 1975 and later the Kheda project in Gujarat are successful examples of how even modern mass media used folk forms to educate and inform rural masses for development.

The SITE project covered villages in many districts of Bihar, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan. Similarly, 443 villages in Gujarat, for many years benefited from daily one hour of transmission of entertainment shows that aimed at educating and informing using local folk forms and folklore.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.4: Which government agency is utilizing and promoting traditional folk media for development purposes?

_____

_____

Q.5: In which year did UNESCO begin an aggressive campaign for use of traditional media for development?

_____

_____



3.5 LET US SUM UP

- History of folk arts goes back to ancient times when a need for expression was felt by people.
- Traditional media grew across the country to cater to the needs and aspirations of common folks.
- Folk art forms have been used for social, religious and political purpose for ages.
- Traditional media consists of theatre, music, songs, ballads, dance, religious discourse, fine arts, aphorisms and puppetry.
- Folk media is informal and interpersonal.
- Traditional media provide mass entertainment and serve as indigenous tools of interpersonal and inter-group communication specially in the rural areas.
- Folk theatre is a composite form in all regions, combining dance, music, art, dialogues, poetry and even folklore.
- Folk media is more flexible and effective in development purposes.
- An important turning point in utilizing traditional media for developmental works came, when in 1972, UNESCO and International Planned Parenthood Federation organized a series of

meetings in London, and stress was laid on integrated use of traditional and mass media for spreading awareness on family planning.

- The formal origins of Indian street theatre can be traced to the radical political theatre in the 'forties of Calcutta'.
- Both government and private organizations use folk media for development message dissemination.
- Cinema has for long used folk songs or folk theatre forms to appeal to rural masses and generate uniqueness.



3.6 FURTHER READING

1. Garghi, Balwant (1991). Folk Theater of India. Calcutta : Rupa & Co.
2. Malhan, P.N (1985). Communication : Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.New Delhi : Publications Division
3. Malik, Madhu (1983). Traditional Forms of Communication and the Mass Media in India. Paris: UNESCO
4. Parmar , Shyam (1975) .Traditional Folk Media in India. New Delhi: Gekha books

3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q.No 1: Folk media scholar Balwant Garghi.

Ans to Q.No 2: Folk theatre form is composite as it combines music, dance, verse, prose, arts and songs all in one form.

Ans to Q.No 3 : Indian folk songs can be divided into the following-

- bhakti songs, devotional songs with strong links to classical music
- ceremonial songs including seasonal, ritual work and love songs ; and
- tribal songs.

Ans to Q.No 4 : Songs and Drama Division is promoting folk art forms since 1954, and using them to spread social and developmental messages.

Ans to Q. No 5 : In 1972, UNESCO and International Planned Parenthood Federation, in London, organized a series of meetings where for the first time at an international platform the need for integrated use of Traditional and Mass media for communication was felt. This was the year when UNESCO began and aggressive campaign for use of traditional media for development.



3.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q.1: What do you mean by folk media?

Q.2: What do you mean by folk theatre? Is it the same as street theatre?

Q.3: Do films make use of traditional media for portraying different social issues? Give examples.

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1: How do traditional folk media serve as indigenous tools of interpersonal and inter-group communication? Explain with the help of examples.

Q.2: Do you consider traditional motifs and symbols as one of the forms of traditional media? Why?

C. Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q.1: Describe with examples how traditional media have been put to use for developmental purposes.

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UNIT 4: TECHNOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS ON TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 Impact of electronic media on traditional media

4.4 Mass communication Media vis-à-vis Folk Culture

4.5 Success stories of the use of traditional media as a catalyst of social change and development

4.6 Let us Sum up

4.7 Further Reading

4.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.9 Model Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to –

- explain the impact of electronic media on traditional media
- discuss the difference between the mode of communication of traditional media and electronic media
- analyse the successful utilization of traditional media for social change and development

4.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you were introduced to the popular forms of traditional folk media in India. In this unit, you will be acquainted with the impact of electronic media on traditional media, differences in the communication of traditional and electronic media and the successful implementation of traditional media in disseminating development messages.

4.3 IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA ON TRADITIONAL MEDIA

With advances in information technology, different forms of media have come to occupy a place in society. New forms of media have emerged but none have been able to replace folk media. Folk media are a part of our culture and identity and hence they are irreplaceable. In India, electronic media i.e. television and radio has played a significant role in popularizing folk forms.

With the electronic media boom, many fear that traditional media might fade away, but that might never happen, as it is an inseparable part of Indian culture. There are many things that electronic media has adapted from traditional media, and vice-versa with changing tastes of people and demands of the times. Yet the purity of folk forms is not much hampered in most traditional media.

Some traditional media like Jatra or Nautanki occasionally include film style songs these days, even television shows use puppetry or folk dances. Cinema has for long used folk songs or folk theatre forms to appeal to rural masses and generate uniqueness. Like in the film *Bhavni Bhavai* (1980), the Bhavai folk form of Gujarat is used. Or the film *Peepli Live*(2010) uses folk songs to make satirical comments on common people's problems. Similarly in *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) a nice fusion of folk music modern songs is seen and *Paheli* (2004) which was directed by Amol Palekar was based on Rajasthan's culture and if you clearly remember puppet was used to start and end the story very beautifully.

Radio, since the colonial era has promoted folk culture of India by using folk forms in its programmes for the rural masses. In internet, some sites give animated options of storytelling mainly with focus on folklore.

This interdependence of electronic and traditional media do sometimes result in interesting shows, but the risk remains that this fusion can lead to corrupting of the pure forms of folk media adding vulgarity and artificiality to it. It is however, unlikely that electronic media will completely replace traditional media. In actuality folk media has a clear-cut advantage

over electronic media. The familiarity, personal contact, common language, credibility and acceptance make folk media universally acceptable among the rural masses.

Madhu Malik in her book *Traditional Forms of Communication and the Mass Media in India* writes that All India Radio (AIR) devotes a considerable amount of time to the broadcast of folk music and folksongs. The National Programme of Drama started in 1956 by Akashvani aimed at acquainting people in different parts of the country with the dramatic literature of regional languages and emphasized folk musical plays. Regional radio stations have engaged in recording folk forms from the remotest corners of the country. Television, a post-independence phenomenon in India has also contributed to popularization and archival of different folk forms of India. For e.g. Krishi Darshan, a programme for farmers aired on Doordarshan, frequently broadcasts performances by folk singers. Folk media expert Shyam Parmar opined that radio and television have added new dimensions to folk music and popularized these outside their language area.

If you take a look at the Fixed Point Chart (FPC) or programme schedule of Doordarshan Kendra, Guwahati, you will come across a number of programmes on different folk forms of Assam. The morning time slots across the week broadcast folk songs of Assam such as Kamrupi Lokageet, Borgeet, Goalporia Lokageet, Ojapali, Dehbichar geet, Zikir etc. There are also programmes on ethnic cuisine and folk dances of Assam. A peep into the private television channels of Assam also reflects the emphasis on promoting folk songs, dances and the overall folk culture of Assam.

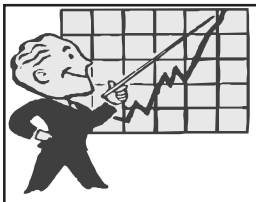
Being a popular medium, electronic media can play a significant role in showcasing the folk culture of a region, popularizing them among the common mass and archiving the forms, especially those oral traditions that faces the risk of extinction with the passage of time. In fact, mass media has to a great extent succeeded in creating renewed interest in folk media among people. In Assam, we have been witnessing the phenomenon of the cassette market being literally flooded with bihu songs when the Bihu festival is round the corner. As far as Indian films are concerned, a large number of them are based on mythological and other narrative themes of the folk genre.

Even television has not kept itself at a safe distance from folklore. Apart from folklore items forming a regular feature in TV programmes, there is a lot of other fare, directly or indirectly drawn from folklore, that is dished out without the folk tag. The formats of different folk performing art forms are adopted in order to incorporate fresh material containing new social messages or even propaganda. In Assam, the Ojapali, puppet show and Kamrupi lokageet have been tried out by different agencies with varying success to propagate such messages as family planning, afforestation etc.

India has inherited several rich, effective popular and powerful traditional media forms, which were developed over the ages. The development of electronic media may have transformed the globe into a village but the traditional forms of certain regions have retained their importance. Different types of electronic media like radio and television have extended the area of coverage of a traditional performance, while traditional media with their inspiring colour and costume, dance and music have enriched the content of the different channels of electronic media. Many scholars are of the opinion that traditional media must be merged with electronic media for better transmission of information. This is because the local people can relate to these forms which may have been used earlier only to provide entertainment.

Traditional media should be used in communication programmes not only for political and socio-economic development but also for cultural development. In fact, it needs to retain its social authenticity. Care must be taken to chose the right form to disseminate the relevant messages in tune with the needs of the society. For instance, Tamasha, which is a form of drama in Maharashtra cannot be used to spread social messages in rural Kerala. However, while integrating traditional media in the spread of messages by the electronic, care must be take so as to preserve the originality of form and not destroy it. Similarly, collaboration between the folk artists and the producers is absolutely essential for the successful use of folk media and electronic media for developmental purposes.

In this regard, an integrated approach is necessary which will go a long way in strengthening the efficiency of both technology based electronic media and folk media.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: When did the National Programme of Drama of Akashvani started?

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Q.2: Why is traditional media more flexible than electronic media?

_____

_____

Q.3: Is electronic media adversely affecting folk media?

_____

_____



ACTIVITY – 4.1

Observe television programmes for a period of one week. Make a list of traditional forms of media that you have seen on television during his period.

4.4 MASS COMMUNICATION MEDIA VIS-À-VIS FOLK CULTURE

The process of communication is as old as mankind. Sign language preceded the spoken word and served as a mode of communication among men. As society evolved, so did the modes of communication. The pattern of communication in a society is a part of its overall culture and it gets reflected in the social structure, institutions and organizations. While traditional folk forms are rooted in the customs, traditions and overall lifestyle of people, mass media has gradually evolved with time and advances made in the field of information technology.



LET US KNOW

Folk Culture : Folk culture refers to the unifying expressive components of everyday life as enacted by localized, tradition-bound groups. Earlier conceptualizations of folk culture focused primarily on traditions practiced by homogeneous, rural groups living in relative isolation from other groups. However, today folk culture is more inclusively recognized as a dynamic representation of both modern and rural constituents. Historically, handed down through oral tradition and now increasingly through dynamic computer-mediated communication, it relates to the cultivation of community and group identity. As far as Assam is concerned, it has a rich cultural heritage. The State exhibits a number of performing arts and social customs like Bhekulir Biya (frog weddings), Jhumur dance, Ojapali dance, me-dam-me-phe (offering oblation to dead and sacrifices to God), bhaona etc.

Ever since the invention of printing and then radio and television, mass communication has reached unprecedented dimensions. Mass media has fulfilled the information needs of people. The biggest advantage of mass mediums is their ability to cater to a large audience with ease and in the quickest time possible.

Despite the popularity and unparalleled growth of mass media, folk mediums were and will continue to remain relevant to the society. Traditional forms hold their credibility and validity even in areas with high mass media penetration and consumption. Aggarwal and Gupta writes, “Traditional uses of folk media were primarily for entertainment, social communication and religious activity. These media have an element of motivational and persuasive communication.”

Many Voices, One World states that traditional forms of communication can be effective in dispelling superstitions, outdated perceptions and unscientific attitudes and practices that people inherit as a part of traditions.

Traditional folk forms are effective in conveying development messages. Since they are close to people's heart and mind, their appeal is intimate and personal. Unlike mass media which reaches out to a heterogeneous audience, traditional media can be used to cater to a particular group of people. This eliminates the cross-cultural communication problems that are likely to arise in mass media.

Traditional folk forms are very functional and interpersonal. They have a contextual base which enables them to incorporate socially relevant messages for development and growth.

Let us take a look at the differences between communication via traditional media and mass media.

a. Mass media messages are general in nature and meant for unlimited, heterogeneous audience. Folk media messages are more specific and cater to a limited, niche audience.
b. The credibility of mass media may suffer at times. But folk mediums are high on credibility as they are rooted in the people's way of life.
c. There is seldom any audience participation in mass media. It is mostly one-way communication with audience at the receiving end. Whereas in folk media, audience participation is very high. People participate in folk media performances and engage as viewers too.
d. Communication through mass media is impersonal whereas folk media communication is very intimate and personal.
e. Technical problems may arise during communication via mass media. This problem does not arise in case of folk media
f. Very often due to barriers of illiteracy and language, mass media communication remains incomprehensible. One may need an interpreter to interpret mass communication messages. This problem does not arise in folk media as the performances are conducted in local languages that are well understood by the community.
g. The mode of communication via folk media is more flexible compared to mass media. As mass mediums incur more cost, it is difficult to design different programmes to cater to the needs of different

communities. Folk media, on the other hand, is flexible. Messages can be modified as per occasion to suit the needs of the community.

h. While the reach of folk media communication is restricted or limited to a particular area, the reach of mass media communication is very wide.

i. The greatest advantage of folk media communication is the scope of immediate feedback. Viewers can share their views and opinions or clarify a doubt right after the performance. Mass media communication lack in instant feedback.

j. The success or failure of communication via folk media can be judged immediately after the performance by taking feedback from viewers. It is, however, difficult to rate the success or failure of mass media communication instantaneously.

4.5 SUCCESS STORIES OF THE USE OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA AS A CATALYST OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

The role of traditional folk media as a catalyst for social change and development cannot be denied. Since the turn of the century, folk forms have increasingly been used for fostering development particularly in rural areas. Traditional media characterize the existence and development of a human society and hence they continue to be relevant irrespective of time. The first recognition of the use of traditional media for communicating development strategies in developing countries came in the year 1972. It was UNESCO that organized a series of meetings in London in 1972 concerning the integration of folk media in communication programmes partaining to family planning.

P.V Stichele writes that for the purpose and process of change and development in rural community, traditional media is the right choice of media to communicate messages. Folk media are an important vehicle of social change. In a developing country like India, traditional media has been successfully used by people and communities to bring awareness and

change. Noted folk media expert Shyam Parmar writes, “India’s role in identifying folk media for communication purposes has been quite positive”.

H.K Ranganath writes that folk songs and ballads have “successfully played a decisive role in attuning the rural mind to the importance of a social or political theme like national unity, social welfare and even family planning”.

Folk media have immense potentiality as message carriers. They are simple in form and flexible in nature. This makes them an appropriate tool for message dissemination particularly in rural areas. Keval J. Kumar writes that from a countrywide perspective, the folk and traditional media are still the only ‘mass’ media in the sense that they have their roots in the tradition and experience of a large majority of the population and that they have a reach much more extensive than any of the modern traditional media. Folk media can be used for bringing a change in the mindset of people and introducing new practices.

In India, different State governments have used traditional media for developmental purposes. In 1977, a voluntary non-governmental organization in Kerala called Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP) organized Science Jatha, a Science Procession in to spread the message of people’s involvement in the development process. From 1980, the Jathas began to use different folk art forms for conveying the themes which were mainly on education, health, environment and social inequality. One issue taken up by the Parishad was the preservation of the Silent Valley, India’s only surviving rain forest. The repertoire consisted of songs, street dramas and other several forms of folk arts. Soon the Jathas began to be known as Kala Jathas and they became so popular that they began to be used extensively not only in Kerala but in some other parts of India also where the local organizations and people have received inspiration from KSSP and have started delivering messages through folk arts.

Well-known theatre personality Ravi Varma of Vikas Lok Manch has been creatively interpreting social realities by interweaving them into the fabric of folk dances, choral singing etc. with the help of slum children. He deals with issues like alcoholism, pollution, religion, inequalities of caste and class, communalism and so forth. One of the group’s most famous

street plays is Hame Jawab Chahiya (1985) on the Bhopal gas tragedy. The play reminds the audience who are mostly children that the Bhopal incident is not a dead issue and that its aftermath still haunts the lives of many. Rajasthan Adult Education Association (RAEA) had conducted an experiment in a village Devakishanapura where they sponsored Ravi Chaturvedi, an alumnus of National School of Drama for formulating development messages through the use of theatre based on stories from the epics. He identified three main issues — untouchability, health hazards and internal feuds which was rampant in the village. He selected some episodes from the epic Ramayana which had dramatic elements and action and reinterpreted them in the context of the problems prevailing in the village. He enacted it with the help of the village youth with great success.

There have been a number of instances of the use of folk media to awaken the conscience of people, reinforce new ideas and bring about desired change in the society. During India's struggle for independence, folk media played a great role in spreading the message of patriotism. Utpal Dutt, a popular Indian actor, is said to have used Jatra for spreading awareness on various social issues in Odisha. Jatra is a folk form of ballad singing.

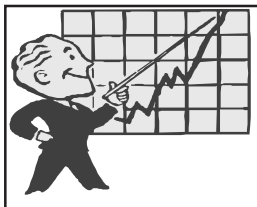
The Song and Drama Division under the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has been successfully using folk media to transmit development messages. Folk songs have played an important role in Chipko movement, Apiko movement, Save the Western Ghats campaign etc. The Song and Drama Division of the Government of India has made use of various forms of traditional media to spread awareness on a number of social issues like AIDS, polio immunization, child and maternal health etc. The Directorate of Field Publicity, media unit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India employed this form of media to propagate agricultural development messages. In 1971,the Bank of India, a nationalized bank carried out a campaign for small savings through puppet shows. The Bank engaged a team of puppeteers to tour selected rural areas of Uttar Pradesh to educate rural masses on small savings schemes. A puppet play that was produced by Indian Institute of Mass Communication

was shown in 200 villages and it made a deep impact on the minds of the villagers. The impact was such that the number of deposits in the Bank from these areas increased within two months.

In Tamil Nadu, Action for Cultural and Political Change (ACPC), an organisation of lower-caste agricultural labourers makes use of drama for social transformation. The members of the ACPC create their own dramas out of their own collective analyses of their immediate situation and the deeper structures in which they are embedded.

In Assam too, United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and National Health Mission (NHM) formerly known as National Rural Health Mission have resorted to the use of folk media to create awareness among people on important issues.

The Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation (MDWS), Govt. of India has successfully implemented the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) in different districts of Assam. Apart from the conventional Information Education Communication (IEC) tools, street play and other folk mediums were used to create awareness among people. The MDWS reports that the TSC campaign has yielded success in Assam by converting kutchha toilets to sanitary latrines and ensuring total environmental sanitation in rural areas.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.4: What do you mean by folk culture?

_____

_____



4.6 LET US SUM UP

We can summarise this unit in the form of following points-

- The National Programme of Drama started in 1956 by Akashvani aimed at acquainting people in different parts of the country with

the dramatic literature of regional languages and emphasized folk musical plays.

- Electronic media can play a significant role in showcasing the folk culture of a region, popularizing them among the common mass and archiving the forms, especially those oral traditions that faces the risk of extinction with the passage of time.
- Traditional media should be used in communication programmes not only for political and socio-economic development but also for cultural development.
- The pattern of communication in a society is a part of its overall culture and it gets reflected in the social structure, institutions and organizations.
- While traditional folk forms are rooted in the customs, traditions and overall lifestyle of people, mass media has gradually evolved with time and advances made in the field of information technology.
- Traditional folk forms are very functional and interpersonal. They have a contextual base which enables them to incorporate socially relevant messages for development and growth.



4.7 FURTHER READING

1. Ahmed, Kasim Ali (2012). Folklore of Assam. Guwahati : EBH Publishers
2. Datta,Birendranath (1999). Folkloric Foragings in India's North-East. Guwahati : Anundoram Barooah Institute of Language
3. Das, Jogesh (2005) Folklore of Assam.New Delhi : National Book Trust

4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No 1 : 1956

Ans to Q.No 2 : Electronic media cannot get immediate audience response, and any changes in it takes long and is expensive. Traditional media on the other hand is flexible to changes and gets immediate response from audience. That is why traditional media is said to be more flexible than electronic media.

Ans to Q.No 3 : No, electronic media does not have adverse effect on traditional folk media. Even though the impact is low, but still some folk theatre forms uses film songs and modern film type costumes to attract audiences. This adds an element of vulgarity to the forms. However, some of the popular folk forms like Villupattu, Burrakatha etc. have managed to retain its pure form even though electronic media have made inroads into the cultural scene.

Ans to Q. No 4 : Folk culture refers to the unifying expressive components of everyday life as enacted by localized, tradition-bound groups. Earlier conceptualizations of folk culture focused primarily on traditions practiced by homogeneous, rural groups living in relative isolation from other groups.



4.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q.1: Are traditional folk forms effective in conveying development messages? Give examples.

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1: What differences do you find in the communication between traditional media and mass media?

Q.2: Has the growth of electronic media led to a decline in popular forms of traditional media? Justify your answer with examples.

C. Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q.1: What role does electronic media play in showcasing the folk culture of a region?

Q.2: Do you think traditional media must be merged with modern electronic media for better transmission of ideas and information? Why?

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UNIT 5: TRADITIONAL MEDIA FOR DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Development Communication and Traditional Media

5.3.1 Development Communication

5.3.2 Traditional media as development media

5.4 How to use traditional folk media for development communication

5.5 Let us Sum up

5.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.7 Further Reading

5.8 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- define development communication and development media
- discuss how traditional folk media can be used as development media
- cite examples of the use of traditional folk media for development communication

5.2 INTRODUCTION

In the last four units, we have discussed the various aspects of traditional folk media. In this unit, the discussions will centre on the potential of traditional media for being used as a media for development communication. At first, we will briefly discuss what is development communication and what are its basic requirements. Then, we will move on to traditional folk media so as to see how it fits in as development media.

So, let us begin our discussion with an introduction to development communication.

5.3 DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

5.3.1 Development Communication

Very simply put, development communication is the practice of systematically applying the processes, strategies, and principles of communication to produce positive social change. It can be termed as the incorporation of strategic communication in development projects so that rather than mere information dissemination, there is actually an effort to bring about behaviour change.

Nora C. Quebral, a pioneering figure in the discipline of Development Communication first coined the term 'Development Communication' in 1972. She defines 'Development Communication' as 'the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential.'

When we speak of development, we are definitely seeking to bring about some kind of behaviour change in the stakeholders concerned. Mere information dissemination, education, or awareness-raising is not sufficient for behaviour change. Behaviour change can be brought about only by understanding the reasons behind as to why people behave in a certain way and what are the barriers which prevent people from accepting change or new practices. This is made possible with the help of strategic communication which can serve as a very powerful tool for actual mobilization and not simply for raising awareness.

Therefore, development communication goes beyond what we understand of communication in the ordinary sense, but is focused at producing concrete results in terms of tangible and measurable change. Any development project is absolutely incomplete and has very poor chances of been successfully

implemented if it is not communicated adequately to the concerned people.

5.3.2 Traditional media as development media

Conventionally different media have been used for development communication. Newspapers, radio, television have been used collectively as well as alternatively for communicating development messages. However, there is a growing debate on whether these modern mass media are actually capable of functioning as effective development media. Development researchers argue that mass media often cannot function as desired due to several reasons like, lack of electricity, high cost, for being highly technical, improper transport, etc. Again, when we are talking of communicating development, we are definitely targeting people or places which are underdeveloped.

Therefore, a question always remains as to whether these underdeveloped people really have the access to such mass media and whether they are able to comprehend the message as expected. Also, these media are often considered to be distant, alien or non-personal, something which make behaviour change difficult to achieve. This results in loss of the intended message. As such, development researchers as well as professionals have been seen as exploring the possibility of using alternative means of communicating development messages. One such media which has emerged over the years, which is considered to be capable of filling up this gap is traditional folk media.

The development of rural India depends a lot on the communication that we are providing to the people. And for that nothing can be more functional and spontaneous than folk art.

Because of the elements of acceptable idioms, functional significance and entertainment components which are inherent in traditional media, such media are seen to exert remarkable impact on the rural society. In a country like India where many places still

do not have access to electricity, where people live in abject poverty, and where illiteracy still remains a major problem, mass media are often rendered futile and ineffective. Apart from that, rural India is faced by the inadequacies of mass media to reach almost 80% of people who resides in village. Moreover, for them the mass media is too glamorous, impersonal and unreliable. Traditional folk media can, however, reach where mass media cannot.

The effectiveness of folk media for development communication has been established by many researchers. Because, traditionally, the uses of folk media were primarily for entertainment, social communication and persuasive communication, they inherently possess the capability of bringing about behaviour change which is one of the characteristics desired of development media.

One of the recommendations of the McBride Commission, which is an international commission, established by UNESCO for the study of communication problems states as follows:

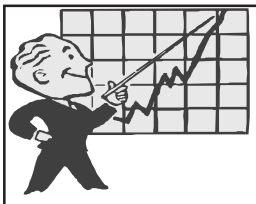
"Even when modern media have penetrated isolated areas, the older forms maintain their validity, particularly when used to influence attitudes, instigate action and promote change. Extensive experience have shown that traditional forms of communication can be effective in dispelling the superstitions, archaic perceptions and unscientific ultimate that people have inherited as part of traditions and which are difficult to modify if the benefits of change are hard to demonstrate. Practitioners of the traditional media use a subtle form of persuasion by presenting the required message in locally popular artistic forms. This cannot be rivalled by any other means of communication."

Being rooted in the soil and bathed in the flavour of the people, traditional media are close to the hearts and minds of the people. Therefore, their appeal is at a more personal, intimate level. This creates greater *rapport* and therefore they are more acceptable. People are actually able to identify with these media, and therefore,

the acceptability and comprehension of the content is enhanced. Different folk media can be used to cater to different regions. Every village has its relevant music, dance or theatre. These traditional media can be used to reach these people in the process of change and development of the country. Traditional media uses a *subtle* form of persuasion by presenting the required message in locally popular artistic forms. This cannot be equalled by any other means of communication. Apart from that, they have the advantage of flexibility. The content can be suitably adapted for incorporating various development messages without changing the form. Thereby, they make excellent development media. So, if we want to inject the message of development among the rural masses, we have to use the folk forms of this country in a more planned manner.

Rapport: a friendly relationship in which people understand each other very well.

Subtle : not very noticeable or obvious.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. What do you mean by development communication?

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Q.2. ....., a pioneering figure in the discipline of Development Communication first coined the term 'Development Communication' in 1972.

Q.3. Which media have been conventionally used for development communication?

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Q.4. What are the disadvantages of using mass media for development communication?

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Q.5. How do traditional media score over mass media as development media?

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5.4 HOW TO USE TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA FOR DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

Instances of the use of Traditional folk media for development communication in our country have been numerous though not consistent and regularly used phenomena like the other conventional media like newspaper, radio or TV.

However, development planners in the *Third World* now understand and appreciate the use of folk media as a most important mode of communication in development programmes. This could possibly be because of the observed inadequacy of the mass media in reaching the target groups. They are now looking at the potentiality of integrating mass media with traditional media. UNESCO for instance is a case in point. Again, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) has also been taking active interest in and supporting efforts to harness the potentialities of the folk media to disseminate environmental communication and motivate people to protect the environment.

The problem which is observed here is that traditional folk media is still seen as something which can complement mass media. In India, mass media is still limited mostly to the urban population, whereas 80% of the country's population live in the villages. And it is at this 80% that most development programmes are directed. If we consider these facts, then



Third World : Developing and least developed countries of the world.

we can say that our approach to communicating with these people is itself greatly flawed. The large amount of money which is being spent for communicating development messages to the rural people through mass media is actually going waste.

We have various folk forms in our country, which are very much alive today. All these need careful investigation, study, and documentation. They need to be carefully studied in terms of their form and content and attempts should be made to project social life, secular themes, and universal values through these folk forms. It is time we stopped looking at traditional folk media as a mere supplement to mass media, but actually as a standalone alternative to mass media.

At a seminar of UNESCO way back in 1974 in New Delhi, a number of guiding principles on how to use the traditional or folk media for promoting development programmes were generated. Let us go through those principles. (Source: Article entitled 'Let's Use Folk Arts and Traditional Media for Development' by Durgadas Mukhopadhyay in The Drum Beat, May 7, 2007)

- The 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 the on-going extension work is vital.
- The prerequisites to the use of the folk media are:
  - an understanding of the rural audience; and
  - the use of these media to provide the rural people with recreation, to attract their attention, and to ensure their participation in developmental activities.
- The utilization of folk media in communication programme should be viewed not only from the perspective of socio-economic development but also cultural development.
- Folklore should thus retain social authenticity. The folk forms have evolved gradually, and wherever they are flexible they retain their appeal to the rural people.

- Not all folk forms can be used for developmental or environment communication purposes; thus they should be carefully studied from the point of view of content and characterization for their possible adaptation in order to carry developmental or environmental messages.
- Folk media productions should be consistent with the needs of the social environment and related to the customs and beliefs of the local communities.
- Since folk media have sociological roots, their utilization should be related to local events and their function in the local communication strategy should be properly assigned.
- Efforts should be made to preserve the originality of each folk form; adaptation need not alter or destroy the form.
- For effective community-level communication strategies, an integrated and planned use of both folk and mass media is necessary for achieving optimum impact and for desired feedback.
- Collaboration between the folk artistes and the media producers is absolutely essential for the successful integration of folk media and mass media communication strategies for developmental purposes.



LET US KNOW

USE OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION – A FEW CASES IN POINT

1972: International Planned Parenthood Federation and UNESCO organized a series of meetings on the integrated use of the folk and the mass media in family planning communication programmers in London.

1980's: Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Communication for Development Group explored ways of using traditional and popular media.

- The commission compiled a package called "A Participatory Methodology

to produce Traditional and Popular Media" based on population communication experiences in Africa.

- There was also a case study entitled "Applying Development Support Communication (DSC) methodologies to population issues: A case study in Malawi" done by Ms Agnes Kavinya, Dr Sultana Alam and Ms Anamaria Decock. These two projects called attention to harnessing the talents of local folk media performers for development communication.

During the Nationalist Movement:

- Alha, the popular ballad of Uttar Pradesh, Lavani of Maharashtra, Gee-Gee of Karnataka, Villupattu of Tamil Nadu and Kavigan of Bengal were effective in arousing the people's conscience against the colonial rule.
- Mahatma Gandhi used traditional folk media in many of his social and political campaigns.
- Eminent Tamil poet Subramanya Bharti used folk music to invoke patriotism.
- In the 1900s, the traditional theatre of Bengal which was already quite popular became a symbol for the anti-colonial nationalist movement.
- In the 1920's Jatra which traditionally dealt with historical or mythological themes only was transformed into a new form of Swadeshi or Nationalist Jatra which dealt with the themes of colonial injustice, caste oppression and feudal exploitation by playwright Mukunda Das.

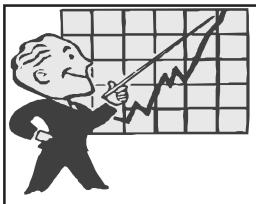
1940s: During the agrarian peasant revolts of Tebhaga and Telangana, public opinion was created with the help of popular folk songs and plays and inspired people to fight against the oppression.

1940's: Indian People Theatre Association (IPTA), used forms like "Jatra" of Bengal, "Bhavai" of Gujrat, "Tamasha" of Maharashtra and "Burrakatha" of Andhra Pradesh to increase social awareness and political education. It played a remarkable role during the Bengal famine in 1943 in which over 5 million people died of starvation. IPTA performers toured the country with a play which exposed hoarders and black-marketers. It succeeded in raising over two lakh rupees and launched a campaign to save food.

1977: Kerala Saastra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP) organized Science Jatha, a Science Procession to spread the message of people's involvement in the development process. From 1980, the Jathas began to use different folk art forms for conveying the themes which were mainly on education, health, environment and social inequality. The repertoire consisted of songs, street dramas and other several forms of folk arts.

1980s:

- Ravi Varma of Vikas Lok Manch used folk dances, choral singing etc. with the help of slum children to deal with issues like alcoholism, pollution, religion, inequalities of caste and class, communalism and so forth. One of the group's most famous street plays is Hame Jawab Chahiya (1985) on the Bhopal gas tragedy.
- During the Chipko and Apiko movements, folk Singers of the region composed songs in folk tunes and sang them in the street.
- Environmentalists used folk arts in South India in the 'Save the Western Ghats' campaign of 1985 which was headed by Seva Sangh.
- Rajasthan Adult Education Association (RAEA) conducted an experiment in Devakishanapura village where they sponsored Ravi Chaturvedi, an alumnus of National School of Drama for formulating development messages through the use of theatre based on stories from the epics.
- Chaturvedi conducted another experiment in the village Garudavasi of Jaipur district which was devastated due to floods. There Chaturvedi conducted a folk theatre workshop as a therapy for rehabilitation of the villagers. In the workshop some scientific causes of the flood were explained.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.6. .....has been taking active interest in using folk media to disseminate environmental communication.

Q.7. What, according to the recommendations of the UNESCO seminar in 1974 in New Delhi, are the prerequisites to the use of folk media?

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Q.8. In the 1920's the traditional Jatra was transformed into a new form of Swadeshi or Nationalist Jatra by playwright ....

Q. 9. ..... used forms like "Jatra" of Bengal, "Bhavai" of Gujrat, "Tamasha" of Maharashtra and "Burrakatha" of Andhra Pradesh to increase social awareness and political education.



5.5 LET US SUM UP

- Development communication is the practice of systematically applying the processes, strategies, and principles of communication to produce positive social change.
- Nora C. Quebral, a pioneering figure in the discipline of Development Communication first coined the term 'Development Communication' in 1972.
- Quebral defines Development Communication as 'the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential.'
- When we speak of development, the focus is on behaviour change in the stakeholders concerned. Mere information dissemination, education, or awareness-raising is not sufficient for behaviour change.
- Conventionally different media have been used for development communication. Newspapers, radio, television have been used

collectively as well as alternatively for communicating development messages.

- However, there is a growing debate on whether these modern mass media are actually capable of functioning as effective development media.
- Because of the elements of acceptable idioms, functional significance and entertainment components which are inherent in traditional media, such media are seen to be more appropriate for development communication.
- Being rooted in the soil and bathed in the flavour of the people, traditional media are close to the hearts and minds of the people. Therefore, their appeal is at a more personal, intimate level. This creates greater rapport and therefore they are more acceptable.
- Instances of the use of Traditional folk media for development communication in our country have been numerous though not consistent and regularly used phenomena like the other conventional media like newspaper, radio or TV.
- However, traditional folk media is still seen as something which can complement mass media.
- We have various folk forms in our country, which are very much alive today. All these need careful investigation, study and documentation.



5.6 FURTHER READING

1. Parmar, Shyam (1994), Traditional Folk Media in India. Research Press

2. Ranganath, H.K. (1980), Folk Media and Communication Mysore: Chinthana Prakashana.

5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Development communication is the practice of systematically applying the processes, strategies, and principles of communication to produce positive social change. It can be termed as the incorporation of strategic communication in development projects.

Ans to Q No 2: Nora C. Quebral

Ans to Q No 3: Newspapers, radio, television have been conventionally used collectively as well as alternatively for communicating development messages.

Ans to Q No 4: There are several disadvantages of using mass media for development communication. Firstly, mass media often cannot function as desired due to several factors like, lack of electricity, high cost, highly technical, improper transport, etc. Again, when we are talking of communicating development, we are definitely targeting people or places which are underdeveloped. Therefore, a question is always there whether these people really have the access to such mass media and whether they are able to comprehend the message as expected. Also, these media are often considered to be distant, alien or non-personal, something which make behaviour change difficult to achieve. This results in the loss of the intended message. Moreover, for them the mass media is too glamorous, impersonal and unreliable.

Ans to Q No 5: Traditional media score over mass media as development media because of the elements of acceptable idioms, functional significance and entertainment components which are inherent in traditional media. Therefore, such media are seen to exert remarkable impact on the rural society.

Ans to Q No 6: United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)

Ans to Q No 7: The prerequisites to the use of the folk media are:

- an understanding of the rural audience; and
- the use of these media to provide the rural people with recreation, to attract their attention, and to ensure their participation in developmental activities.

Ans to Q No 8: Mukunda Das.

Ans to Q No 9: Indian People Theatre Association (IPTA),



5.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q.1 : Who first coined the term 'Development Communication' and in which year?

Q.2 : What is a Science Jatha?

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1: Explain what is development communication and development media.

Q.2: Do you think traditional media is more appropriate as development media?

Q.3: What are the advantages of using traditional folk media as development media?

C. Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: What is the status of the use of traditional folk media for development communication in our country?

Q. 2: Enumerate the differences between traditional media and mass media in their use as development media.

Q.3 : What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of using folk media and mass media for the purpose of development ?

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UNIT 6 : TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA AND INDIAN CULTURE

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives:

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Features of Folk Tradition

- 6.3.1 Features of folk tradition
- 6.3.2 Role of traditional media

6.4 Media for communicating Social Ethos

- 6.4.1 Traditional Media and social ethos
- 6.4.2 Modern mass media and social ethos

6.5 Folk media as a platform for disseminating information about Indian culture.

6.6 Let us Sum up

6.7 Further Reading

6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

6.9 Model Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As you go through this unit you will be able to :

- learn about the features of folk tradition
- look into how media is used for communicating social ethos
- discuss how folk media can disseminate information about Indian culture.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

Folk tradition reflects the cultural values and customs of a society. This unit will give you a glimpse into India's folk tradition and how it is used to disseminate information on Indian culture. Moreover, this unit will discuss how media communicates social ethos.

6. 3 FEATURES OF FOLK TRADITION

The folk traditions of India, are deeply rooted in the culture and customs of Indian society, and remain an integral part of people's everyday existence. Their joys, sorrows, aspirations and imaginations are all interwoven in the traditional media forms or folk tradition.

For a society to develop in the true sense, the foundation needs to be laid on traditions and social values. Development is essential, but not by ignoring traditions. Adapting to modernization mindlessly can be hazardous, if traditional values are not incorporated in the development methods. For a healthy society, its culture and traditions need to remain alive.

The folk or traditional arts of India go back to the ancient times when it was born out of people's need for entertainment, creative expression and remain united as a society. The traditional media grew in the form of theatre, dance, music, songs and ballads, handicraft and fine art, puppetry, legends and folktales, and also religious discourses. From ancient times, these folk art or traditional media forms have been used for social, cultural, religious and political purposes, apart from pure entertainment.

Folk tradition is meant to promote traditional values and customs and social ethos of a community and understand the dynamic nature of life. It needs to maintain its purity, yet make necessary changes with the need of times.

Rabindranath Tagore expressed his views on traditional media, in one of his famous speeches on "Swadeshi Samaj" in July 1904, in which he said:

"All traditional structure of art must have sufficient degree of elasticity to allow it to respond to varied impulses of life, delicate or virile, to grow with its growth to the traditional performing art is an aesthetic object, the concept of belongingness and affinity in cultural context. The folk forms satisfy our innate need for self expression, for moral instruction combined with entertainment and for the dramatic and the lyrical. The traditional forms preserving and disseminating in lively manner the tradition and culture of our forefathers."

Rural India's richest legacy is its traditional folk arts and forms that have a history of being agents of social awareness. These forms were always imaginatively created depending on needs of the social environment and for larger benefit. Songs, ballads, folk theatre, paintings or handicrafts, even dances of a region play important role in keeping traditions alive, yet making necessary changes in lifestyle as per need of the times and situations.

Traditional media has played a role in social movements, freedom struggle, or people's quest for identity and fight for justice since centuries. Yet there are many challenges these forms are facing today, as not many in the young generation of artisan families want to learn these art or make a living out of these. They look for more lucrative options now. So it is strong public support in some places, and also government agencies, researchers or cultural activists who are playing saviour to these folk forms. They are engaging rural folk artists for taking the traditional media ahead and also make a living. The Song and Drama Division has been constantly working to reviving these folk forms apart from theatre personalities who constantly experiment with their work.

The importance of traditional media for Indian society can never be ignored as its interpersonal characteristics and ability to absorb people's aspirations with time has always been reflected in performances across the country. The forms thus can influence the illiterate as well as literate masses alike. In rural areas people relate to it and in urban set-ups people find them amusing and entertaining, so both ways the messages are registered in minds serving the purpose. Preserving folk tradition thus becomes essential.

6.3.1 Features of folk tradition:

Some of the basic features of folk tradition are-

a. These forms are region and culture centric, hence they remain close to people's hearts.
b. These are flexible in the sense, that any message can be updated, fast and quick changes in the performance can be made

whenever needed. Current issues, mythology or history, anything can be shown through these.

c. Forms like Traditional theatre is composite, with songs, dance, dialogues, puppetry, humour, satire and much more, making them more entertaining and impactful.

d. Colloquial language, local dialects help audiences understand the messages well and derive a sense of belongingness to the whole atmosphere during a show, be it dance, drama, puppetry or songs.

e. The themes are such that these forms constantly promote culture and tradition.

f. In the garb of entertainment, important messages are imparted on social, political or religious matters, in a subtle manner, without hurting sentiments.

g. Acceptable by all age groups and genders among both literate as well as illiterate masses.

h. Wins confidence and credibility as it gives the audience scope to respond and react immediately after a performance, or even during it.

i. Repeat performance is possible immediately when in demand to satisfy audiences.

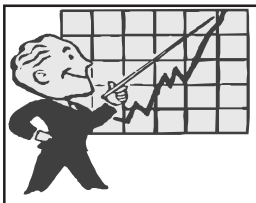
j. Monitors rural society all the time.

6.3.2 Role of traditional media

A vital factor in traditional media is that the sender and the receiver belong to the same community with common traditional values and social customs, so the folk form always involves the culture and ethos of the community, helping it to move on from one generation to another.

Since themes come from both mythology and day to day customs, beliefs and values, real life incidents, people's relation with nature and animals and their fears, desires and joy; traditional

media influence people's mindset and change their views to inculcating better values. People accept ideas and messages readily. Whether sensitive issues like dowry, honour killing, or prevention of HIV/AIDS, traditional media cover everything . At present a lot of effort are being put on promoting the girl child. Here traditional media can convey to masses how a girl child can also be the torch bearer of society by using legends of Lakshmi Bai, Razia Sultan, Joymoti etc. who have influenced historical events. Or promote wisdom by showing plays on characters of the past that stood for wisdom, wit and humour, all at same time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What did Rabindranath Tagore say about traditional forms?

_____

_____

Q.2: What roles have traditional media played through ages?

_____

_____

6. 4 MEDIA FOR COMMUNICATING SOCIAL ETHOS

Social ethos in a society, determines its progress and development. Both traditional and electronic media have played a role in communicating social ethos. While traditional media, since ages has retained its quality of flexibility updating its themes with times, even the electronic media tries to cater to changing tastes and attitudes of a society.

To make traditional media more acceptable, they take help from opinion Leaders (Like Panchayat heads or teachers in local schools), who have a strong hold over people in villages, to throw light on changing attitudes and needs of the people. These inputs help make necessary changes and folk performances enhance their popularity. Even researchers for electronic media try to talk at grassroot to find what the audiences want and how

social ethos can be conveyed in an acceptable manner. The only demand of audiences is, the messages given should be truthful and be true to its social ethos.

6.4.1 Traditional Media and social ethos

Traditional media is the pulse of simple rural life and the best messenger of tradition. Traditional media, in ancient times, was born with the aim of entertainment. In modern times, it has moved on to become a trusted informer and educator for the simple rural folks many of whom still remain illiterate and poor.

Though some popular folk forms are under the threat of extinction due to advent of electronic media, low income for artists, yet with support for organizations like Song and Drama Division, or Social Action Groups, or public and private sector units, Traditional folk forms are being revived and kept alive to continue its work of communicating social ethos and spreading social messages.

Traditional media, performed mostly by local artists and also professional artist groups, has a high penetration power even into remote areas. Whether a border village towards Pakistan in Punjab or Rajasthan, or a remote location in Arunachal Pradesh, close to Chinese territory, folk media reaches all, to entertain and educate. Hence it has remained a reliable tool in carrying on Indian social customs, values and also reflecting social ethos.

History tells us how social reformers like Srimanta Sankardev, or Chitanya Mahaprabhu, or Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and many others used folk traditions to convey both religious and social customs. During the freedom struggle activist poet Subramanyam Bharti, Rabindranath Tagore, and others used folk forms to communicate with rural masses. Even Mahatma Gandhi used religious discourse and traditional media to motivate people.

Today whether it is cleanliness drive like Swatchh Bharat, or message on family planning, HIV/AIDS, saving the girl child, or maternal and infant health, traditional media still plays a crucial role

in conveying messages. Puppetry remains very popular along with street theatre. Folk theatre and dance programmes also serve the purpose.

When a bank officer, or health worker directly tells someone to start an account and save money, or give birth to the child in hospitals, people still remain ignorant. But when a puppet show, or a folk theatre, with help of songs and dance, along with humorous dialogues conveys the same message it shows results.

Even in changing times, some values remain same and are reflected in traditional media like, respect for elders, or honesty and hard work, or conservation of natural resources and respect for nature or evil of dowry. Simple folk songs sung in weddings or celebration for a new born baby; convey lessons of life to the new bride, or young mother, or in laws and groom. A Bihu song can convey how the youth is losing its creativity all the time depending on technology, or a Lavani can comment of wrong practices of politicians.

People's emotions are stirred while social ethos are communicated through traditional media.

6.4.2 Modern mass media and social ethos

The mass media has the power to reach out to a vast audience at a single time itself, taking its messages far and wide. Thus it is an important medium to communicate anything, good or bad. It remains a different issue whether all people are equally influenced by the mass media messages or not. But since the reach is wide, a majority of viewers do get exposed to what is being conveyed and also get influenced.

Radio: In early days of radio, when a programme was made for farmers, the focus was not only on new inventions in agricultural technology, but also the importance of old methods of farming. Gradually with industrial development, these programmes began to talk about new fertilizers, chemical based manure and hybrid

technology for better income through farming forgetting about old methods. But now again, with research in wide scale, the ill effects of many advanced methods of farming on farmer's and consumer's health is seen and once again programmes on radio have begun to promote organic or traditional methods of farming. Once again the basic beliefs of the community on farming is being conveyed.

Television: Similarly, in television, changing beliefs and ideas in people is reflected. While some programmes still continue to stereotype women as submissive, but quality programmes focus on changing scenario and women achievers in all walks of life. Today, issues that were considered a taboo once, like homosexuality (Which has been a part of human society since ancient times) or single parenthood, or divorce and action against domestic violence, are being openly discussed on television forums. Earlier many TV shows glorified joint family system, while now nuclear family system is seen more in the television shows.

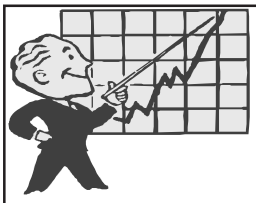
Cinema: One of the most popular forms of mass media, also known as mirror to society, cinema has played a vital role in communicating social ethos since the last century. The early Indian films, till forties, refrained from showing women as bold, but for one or two historical figures. Also portrayal of the working class was done, as dependent and not capable of thinking high. Stress was only on tradition and customs.

In the fifties and sixties, some of this changed, when revolution by lower classes, western culture getting popular among women, and materialistic society was reflected through films. From the seventies till nineties, heroines began to play characters that are empowered, are professionally active and financially independent. Also rise of people from lower strata of society began to dominate themes of films.

The twenty-first century has come up with experimental cinema that explores any subject of interest to people. A woman's right to take decisions in all aspects of her life, the struggles of a

transgender, openly promoting adoption or single parenthood, throwing light on all kinds of professions including those of bar dancers, or sex workers, or changing ideas on the institution of marriage among all age groups, have been very well used by filmmakers in their work.

Thus, ethos of a society are reflected well in the media, and also communicated to all sections of the society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3: Why mass media is used to communicate social ethos?

_____

_____

Q.4: How traditional media is more effective in reaching people?

_____

_____

6.5 FOLK MEDIA AS A PLATFORM FOR DISSEMINATING INFORMATION ABOUT INDIAN CULTURE

The essence of Indian culture lies in tolerance, harmony and knowledge. Culture of a society is determined by many factors that include how the people speak, behave, what they wear and what they eat, what religious and social beliefs determines their actions, what architecture rules their infrastructure, their literature and all the classical and folk media forms. These reflect their ethos.

Indian civilization is one among the oldest, and its culture reflects the philosophy of unity among diversity. The land has been the powerhouse of knowledge, discovery and inventions from ancient times, boasting of rich literature and epics, religious and philosophical scriptures. The many races, some indigenous, while others migrated through invasions and other climatic reasons, have helped develop a rich heritage of multi-culture.

The cuisine, attires, jewellery religious rituals, languages, dialects legends, festivals and mythology, all together have helped determine the soul of its traditional media forms. Not just the music, but the musical instruments also reflect the culture of that community. Hence the folk media reflects Indian culture in true sense, compared to modern media. It reflects in its performances, various aspects of Indian culture.

Any traditional folk performance in a village is taken as a celebration just like a festival. It is a very important way of mobilizing the masses. When a Nautanki, an Ankiya Nat, or Jatra is announced for a village, the people, mostly peasants, house wives, artisans or workers, and the children or the elderly, plan their day's work accordingly finishing the daily chores early. They dress up in their best, go to the venue with excitement and also enjoy socializing and interacting with each other while enjoying the performance. The performance refreshes their minds.

Across India, forms like Nautanki, Ramlila, Jatra, Yakshagana, Therukoottu, Bhavai, Ankiya Nat, Tamasha, or Powada, Gee Gee, Villupatter, Burrakatha, Daskathia, Kavigaan or Naam Kirtan and puppetry are traditional ways used to disseminate information on Indian culture. The ways of people's life, moral lessons, essential conduct of people, history, legends, mythology or factors affecting people, richness of our civilization, everything is incorporated in folk forms and conveyed to masses from time to time.

PC Joshi, senior media and communication commentator, had stated in his writings on communication and national media some features of traditional media emphasizing on how folk forms should be used to regenerate culture.

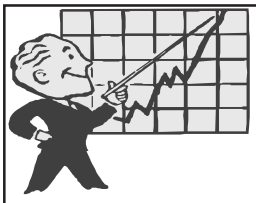
He observed:

a. In the folk tradition, the entertainer, entertained, and the creative artists are rolled together with community into one.
b. Art and cultural forms arise as a response to the struggle for social existence against the hostile forces of nature and society.
c. In folk art there is no class or age distinction, enjoyed by all, giving stronger support and strength.

d. Traditional media has constituted the fountain head of themes, legends, myths, imagery, and symbolism that classical art and culture has drawn upon in abundant measures. The periods of literacy and cultural rebirth have been the periods of cross-fertilization between folk and classical traditions.

Great theatre personalities of the past like, Phani Sarma of Assam, Habib Tanvir of North India, Badal Sircar and Bijon Bhattacharya of West Bengal, and more contemporary ones like Kanhaiyalal or Ratan Thiyam of Manipur and many others have, in their works incorporated features of traditional folk theatre to keep the forms alive and the traditions of their respective states flow to common masses.

The modern media sometimes practices selective discrimination by reaching out to people only who can afford it or who matter, and also adulterate tradition through western influence. With globalization mass media at times also becomes insensitive to needs of particular communities. But traditional media remains loyal to people's aspirations accommodating the needs of each community in its own way by continuing to give moral, social and cultural lessons. Not only costumes, dialect, settings and themes, relevant to the community, but also sentiment about the legacy of forefather's is what gets people to trust traditional media and inculcate the messages conveyed in their day to day lives.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: Why traditional media is used as a platform to disseminate culture?

_____

_____

Q.6: Name some veteran theatre personalities who have promoted traditional media in their theatre works.

_____

_____



6.6 LET US SUM UP:

A careful analysis of this unit will bring to light the following points-

- Folk Traditions of India are deeply rooted in its culture.
- For a society to develop in the true sense, the foundation needs to be laid on traditional values.
- Rabindranath Tagore believed that all traditional forms should have elasticity to accommodate with changing times, yet carry the tradition of our forefathers.
- Traditional media has played a crucial role in social and cultural movements and freedom struggle, also in people's fight for justice and quest for identity.
- Both rural and urban population feels amused by traditional media and absorbs messages well.
- These forms are region and culture centric.
- Traditional media is not only entertaining, but also flexible and interpersonal, acceptable by all age groups and gender
- Electronic media has wide reach and hence used for communicating social ethos.
- Radio, television and cinema, all these mass media forms have sincerely played a role in conveying social ethos.
- Traditional media continues to remain a trusted way of communicating social ethos due to its ability to penetrate even in remote areas, whether it is deserts of Rajasthan, Punjab and Pakistan border, or hills of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Traditional media is the pulse of rural life and best messenger of culture.
- PC Joshi believed that Traditional media should be used to regenerate culture.
- A folk media performance in a village is something like a celebration.
- Great theatre personalities of India have also incorporated folk tradition in their works.



6.7 FURTHER READING

1. Kumar, Keval J. (2010) Mass Communication in India. Mumbai : Jaico Publishing House
2. Micheal Traber (Ed) (2003) Globalisation, Mass Media and Indian Cultural Values. New Delhi: ISPK
3. Sharma, Suresh K., Sharma, Usha (2004) Cultural and Religious Heritage of India. New Delhi : Mittal Publications

6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK PROGRESS

Ans to Q.No 1: Rabindranath Tagore believed that all traditional forms should have elasticity to accommodate with changing times, yet carry the tradition of our forefathers.

Ans to Q.No 2 : Traditional media has played crucial role in social and cultural movements and freedom struggle, also in people's fight for justice and quest for identity.

Ans to Q. No 3 : Mass media is used to communicate social ethos as it has a wide reach and covers large areas at one time. So a majority of people are exposed to it.

Ans to Q. No 4 : Traditional media continues to be more effective in communicating social ethos due to its ability to penetrate even in remote areas, whether it is deserts of Rajasthan, Punjab and Pakistan border, or hills of Arunachal Pradesh. Moreover, their interpersonal nature makes them more acceptable.

Ans to Q.No 5 : The modern media sometimes gets discriminatory by reaching out to people only who can afford it. With globalization mass media at times also becomes insensitive to needs of particular communities. But traditional media remains loyal to people's aspirations accommodating the needs of each community in its own way by continuing to give moral, social and cultural lessons. Not

only costumes, dialect, settings and themes, relevant to the community, but also sentiment about the legacy of forefather's is what gets people to trust traditional media and inculcate the messages conveyed in their day to day lives.

Ans to Q. No 6 : Veteran theater people from the past like Phani Sarma, Habib Tanvir, Badal Sircar, Bijon Bhttacharya, and more contemporary like Kanhaiyalal, Ratan Thiyam and other young members have incorporated folk media forms in their works.



6.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q.1 : Are traditional media only performed by local artists?

Q.2 : How does cinema help in communicating social ethos?

B. Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1 : What is the role of traditional media in the society?

Q.2 : What are the features of folk tradition?

C. Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q.1 : 'The folk traditions of India, are deeply rooted in the culture and customs of Indian society'- Discuss.

Q.2 : How does traditional media help in communicating social ethos?

Q.3 : Does folk media help in disseminating information about Indian culture?

*** ***** ***

UNIT 7: RELEVANCE OF TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Traditional folk forms in rural India

- 7.3.1 Folk Theatre
- 7.3.2 Folksongs
- 7.3.3 Narrative forms
- 7.3.4 Religious discourse
- 7.3.5 Puppet show

7.4 Impact on rural development

7.5 Uses in different fields

7.6 Let us Sum up

7.7 Further Reading

7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

7.9 Model Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to –

- list the various traditional folk forms in rural India
- appreciate the impact of traditional media on rural development
- discuss the use of traditional media in different fields

7.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be able to get an idea of the various traditional folk forms prevalent in rural India, study how traditional media helps in rural development as well as its uses by different government and non-government agencies.

7.3 TRADITIONAL FOLK FORMS IN RURAL INDIA

Traditional media or folk media are the indigenous channels of communication for expressing the local customs and beliefs as well as social, moral and emotional need of the people within the community. It is lively in nature and corresponds to the changing time pattern.

Since ancient time, traditional folk forms have been used in India as a vehicle for disseminating information to the masses. India has a very rich variety of folk forms and includes different combination of drama, dance, song, mime, story-telling and puppetry. Traditional folk forms in India can be broadly classified into five categories – *folk theatre*, *folksongs*, *narrative form*s like ballads, folktales and other story-telling forms, *religious discourses* and *puppet show*s.

7.3.1 Folk Theatre

Indian folk theatre has a vast diversity. Each region has its own style of presentation and addresses issues pertaining to that region. However, all the different regional forms share certain commonality and unifying features that are borrowed largely from classical Sanskrit theatre. One common feature among all the regional forms is the presence of *Sutradhar* (stage manager) and *Vidushak* (narrator or buffon) under various names and guises. Other features of folk theatre borrowed from the classical theatre are: stage preliminaries, an invocation at the beginning and benediction at the end of the performance, stylized movements, masks and prominent make-up. In all the traditional theatre forms, songs and the art of singing have an important role to play. Folk theatres are generally performed in an open space and at ground level, bringing the performers into flesh-and-blood contact with the audience. The content for the theatre is largely based upon mythology, legends, romances and other secular theme. Some varieties of regional folk theatres of India are:

- **Jatra:** Jatra is the folk theatre form of Bengal. Although it dates back to 15th century, jatra became popular by the 18th century.

Growing out of the Bhakti movement, the initial themes were exclusively religious. Towards the 19th century it started containing humors and socio-political comments on contemporary themes. A jatra troupe consists of an *Adhikari* (equivalent of the Sanskrit *sutradhar*) *and Juri*, a team of singers well versed in classical singing that interpret and elaborate on the songs of the main character. The *Juri* was later replaced by the *Vivek* (conscience), a character who took over the role of the *Juri*.

- **Nautanki:** Nautanki is usually associated with Uttar Pradesh. It is popular in the city of Kanpur, Lucknow and Hathras. Apart from UP, nautanki is also performed in the villages of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. The performance begins with the traditional invocation followed by the *chaubola* – a song performed by the *Ranga* (Sutradhar), after which the play is performed. There was a time when only men acted in nautanki but nowadays even women have started taking part in the performances. Nautanki is a secular form with a blend of Hindu and Muslim cultures.
- **Bhaona:** Bhaona is a presentation of the Ankia Naat of Assam. It gives a cultural glimpse of Assam, Bengal, Orissa, Mathura and Brindavan. The *sutradhar* begins the story first in Sanskrit and then either in Brajawali or Assamese. He recites slokas, sings, dances and recites the prose. Apart from the sutradhar, a bhaona troupe consists of *Bhaoriya* (actors playing the role of different characters), *Gayan* (the singers) and *Bayan* (the musicians playing khol, taal from the beginning to the end of play). Bhaona was written by Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva in the early 16th century.
- **Tamasha:** It is the folk theatre form of Maharashtra. A full length contemporary tamaasha typically contains an invocation; *gowlan* (song on the theme of Lord Krishna and the milkmaid); *lavanis* (narrative poetical compositions); *sawal-jawabi* (celestial pair like Shiva-Parvati pose and answer intricate riddle); the *vag* (play)

and the *mujra* (homage to saints and gifted writers). Unlike other theatre forms, women play the role of the main dancer in tamaasha.

- **Therukoothu:** Therukoothu is the folk theatre form of Tamil Nadu, literally meaning 'street play'. It is mostly performed during the Mariamman (rain goddess) festival to achieve rich harvest. It contains a great deal of impromptu dialogue from the actors, sutradhar and the buffon. Therukoothu draw its theme from epics and scriptures.

These are only a few forms of folk theatres found in India. There are of course a numerous other forms like *Ramleela*, *Raasleela*, *Bhavai* of Gujarat, *Bhand Pather* of Kashmir, *Yakshagana* of Karnataka and many more.

7.3.2 Folksongs

Like folk theatre, India has a rich tradition of folksongs which is diverse because of its cultural and geographical diversity. Every region and/or community has its own particular style. Shyam Parmar in his book Traditional Folk Media in India claims that there are over three hundred perceptible folksong styles in India. He categorizes folksongs into:

- **Bhakti songs**; devotional songs with strong link to classical music
- **Ceremonial songs**; seasonal, ritual, work and love songs
- **Tribal songs**

For example: *Baul* of Bengal, *Garba* of Gujarat, *Bihu* of Assam, *Ghumar* of Rajasthan, *Chakri* of Kashmir, *Kilkali Pattu* of Kerala, *Dadaria* of Madhya Pradesh among others.

7.3.3 Narrative forms

Narrative forms emphasizes on the singing of songs, mostly ballad. Narrative forms have been used to spread the message of patriotism, national unity, social reforms and other social, cultural and economic issues. Some popular narrative forms are:

- **Burrakatha:** Burrakatha is performed in the villages of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana by a three member troupe. The troupe consists of *kathakadu*, the principal performer who dances and recites the story; *rajkiya*, acts as someone who knows worldly ways and draws analogies between the story and contemporary socio-political problems. The *rajkiya* stands on the right hand side of the *kathakadu*; and the *hasyam* who stands on the left hand side of the *kathakadu* plays the drum and provides comic relief. Burrakatha draws its theme from mythological, historical as well as socio-political issues.
- **Dasakathia:** Dasakathia is the narrative form of Orissa. It is performed by a two-member team – the *gayaka* (singer) and the *palia* (accompanist). The singing is highly stylized, drawing its theme from mythology, folktales and famous battles. Apart from the singing, humorous interlude; skits; proverbs and anecdotes are integral to the performance.

  Some other narrative forms existing in India are the *Alha* of Uttar Pradesh, *Naqal* of Punjab, *Villupattu* of Tamil Nadu and *Powada* of Maharashtra.

7.3.4 Religious discourse

Religious discourse is a kind of dramatic exposition of stories and songs. The main performer is known as *Kathakar* who has an in-depth knowledge of the scriptures apart from possessing musical ability and the qualities of a good actor and story-teller, as well as first-hand knowledge of local customs. Religious discourse is known by different names in different parts of the country – *Harikatha, Katha, Kirtan, Pravachan* and others.

7.3.5 Puppet show

Puppetry is an ancient form of performing art integral to the performance arts heritage of India. References to puppets have been found in the two epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Puppet performances have been an important traditional media addressing

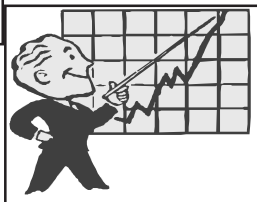
various social issues and concerns of the people. Puppet shows are generally performed at village gatherings, market fairs and school playgrounds. They are understood and appreciated by people of all age-groups. There are four basic types of puppets in India – glove puppet, rod puppet, string puppet and shadow puppet.

- **Glove puppet:** Glove Puppets are mainly found in Orissa, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. However due to its simplicity, it is increasingly used all over the country by modern puppeteers. A glove puppet is worn by the puppeteer in his/her hand. The puppeteer manipulates the head of the puppet with the index finger, while the arms are manipulated by the thumb and middle finger.
- **Rod puppet:** Rod Puppets are mostly found in West Bengal. They have articulated joints, manipulated by using three main rods – one at the back to hold the puppet and the other two rods attached to the hands of the puppet. Rod puppets are generally larger in size, permitting a bigger audience to watch the performance.
- **String puppet:** String Puppets have multiple joints which are suspended by strings. The strings are looped around the fingers of the puppeteer who control the movements of the puppets. The manipulating techniques, size, shapes and costumes of the puppets vary from region to region. Strings puppets are popular in Rajasthan, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- **Shadow puppets:** Shadow Puppets are two dimensional figures. They are illuminated with a strong light source from behind to cast a shadow on a white (generally cotton) screen, that are either black-and-white or in colour. Shadow puppets are popular in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Orissa. The puppets of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka cast color shadows while that of Kerala and Orissa cast black-and-white shadows.

Apart from the above mentioned forms, there are other traditional forms of folk media found across the country such as *Pithora* paintings of Bhils and Bhilala tribes of Madhya Pradesh; *Lipai* of the Rajwar community of Chattisgarh; *Street plays; Mandana wall and floor paintings* of the Malwa, Nimar and Tanwarghar regions of Madhya Pradesh; *Mohoho* festival of Assam; a variety of traditional motifs and symbols like *folk motifs*, *floor murals*, *rangoli* among others.



Fig: Mandana painting



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Tamasha is performed in:

a) Tamil Nadu b) West Bengal

c) Kerala d) Maharashtra

Q.2: Nautanki is popular in:

a) West India b) North India

c) East India d) South India

Q.3: Shadow puppets have articulated joints that are maneuvered using rods. (True/False)

Q.4: The narrative form of Orissa is called Dasakathia. (True/False)

7.4 IMPACT ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural development means overall improvement in the social, political, economical and cultural well-being of all the people living in villages as well as remote areas. For rural development to be successful it is important that it touches the vast majority of the people. The early model of development adopted by development practitioners and thinkers focused mainly on economic growth of the third world countries through urbanization, industrialization and capital growth. However this model soon proved to be futile and had to be replaced by an alternative model which emphasized on giving choice to the local people and contextualizing development issues. The alternative model gave importance to active participation and mobilization of the poor people to bring the intended development.

Many scholars and development practitioners understood the role of communication in fostering development in the third world countries. In fact the role of communication is central to mobilizing people and seeking their participation to bring development in the grass root level. Modern mass media (television, radio, print, internet), although, caters to a large audience at any given time, its penetration is still low and the content is very much urban-centric. The issues, concerns and problems of the people from rural and remote areas are hardly addressed by the modern mass media. The high rate of illiteracy in a developing country like India is also a crucial factor that holds against the influence of modern mass media in rural areas. Another hurdle is the lack of proper infrastructure which is a basic requisite for accessibility of modern mass media. Moreover, people in the rural areas view the mass media as glamorous, impersonal and unbelievable – for many it is still an alien form and therefore not trustworthy to accept it as part of their everyday life.

Traditional media fills that vacuum by representing the everyday culture and rituals, addressing issues and concerns of the community, and educating the non-literate groups. It has a broad social base, especially in parts where local dialects are the only way of communication. Its participatory nature adds to its mass appeal. Besides, traditional media has established a good rapport with the community by integrating thematic and textual material drawn from the social life, customs and beliefs of the community.

Acknowledging the role of folk media in the development process of the third world countries, UNESCO in 1972 organized a series of meetings in London on the integrated use of the folk media and mass media in family planning programme. The success of the program resulted in a number of seminars and workshops around the world. The Indian government realized the potential of folk media in the development process well before it was picked up by UNESCO. The first five year plan of the government projected that apart from the electronic media the rural people should be approached through folk media for disseminating information about various government schemes and policies.

From a historical perspective, the effectiveness of traditional media as a tool for fostering development and creating social and political awareness is not a new phenomena in our country. It's been reported that traditional media was used to create consciousness against the colonial rule of the British; it was also effective in many political and social campaigns launched by Mahatma Gandhi. In the 1940s IPTA (Indian People's Theatre Association) successfully handled some of the popular regional theatre forms like *Jaatra* of Bengal, *Bhavai* of Gujarat, *Tamasha* of Maharashtra and *Burrakatha* of Andhra Pradesh for social awareness as well as political change. Post independence the government has continued to use it to convey various developmental messages to the rural population. The significance of folk arts in social and political communication was felt and recognized 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)

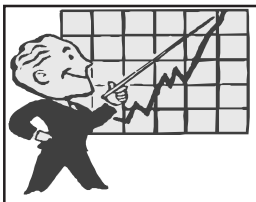
Apart from the government many development agencies and practitioners, social workers and NGO have used traditional media for various developmental and awareness activities. For instance, folk songs played a crucial role in the success of the *Chipko Movement* and the *Appiko Movement* to save the environment. Similarly folk art was used by environmentalist in South India in the Save the Western Ghats campaign. The MacBride Commission also recognized the importance of traditional media in the process of development. In its report *'Many Voices, One World'* (1982) it cited,

> Extensive experience shows that traditional forms of communication can be effective in dispelling the superstitions, archaic perceptions and unscientific attitudes that people inherited as part of tradition, and which are difficult to modify if the benefits of change are hard to demonstrate. Practitioners

of the traditional media use a subtle form of persuasion by presenting the required message in locally popular artistic forms. This cannot be rivaled by any other means of communication.

In rural areas traditional media commands immense credibility and impact. They are the most appropriate channels to change the attitude, behaviour and outlook of people about beliefs and practices that hamper the growth of the community. In India every community have their own set of folk media. People from the community can be engaged and trained to impart information and create awareness about issues like HIV AIDS by utilizing the local folk forms. In Uttar Pradesh, for example, Sanskriti Sewa Sansthan - a theater group perform plays across the state on various social themes and issues to sensitize the people. They mainly address issues related to HIV AIDS apart from polio awareness, drug addiction, government schemes and youth based programs. Similarly puppetry, another form of folk media, has been used in the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) when it was launched in 1994. Puppets are also being increasingly used for addressing issues such as child education, modern methods of farming, construction of toilets etc.

In the last few decades many technological innovation has taken place in the field of communication which has led to manifold growth in the communication channels. However this has not undermined the potential of traditional media as it is still subscribed by a majority of the population living in the rural areas. It is necessary for all stake holders to understand and utilize the communication potential of traditional media to bring positive transformation in the behaviour and attitude of the rural people. As traditional media appeals to the emotion rather than the intellect it can more easily penetrate the message of development among the rural masses. It is a strong social tool that can tackle issues such as village power issues, changes in village structures and values, advantages of proper hygiene and sanitation, safe drinking water, skill development among the youths, scientific methods of farming, girl education, panchayati raj, healthcare and family welfare among others.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: Rural development means:

a) Socio-political improvement

b) Economic improvement

c) Cultural improvement d) All of the above

Q.6: Traditional media is widely accepted in rural areas because:

a) It is an intellectual media b) It is a modern media

c) It is a participatory media d) It is a glamorous medium

7.5 USES IN DIFFERENT FIELDS

Traditional media are the indigenous channels of communication which have survived and flourished over many centuries. Although the content has changed from time-to-time to fit itself to the present, the structural characteristics have not been disturbed over the ages. As discussed earlier, the use of traditional media in our country is not a recent phenomenon. Many freedom fighters used it as a political tool to create awareness against the British Raj in India. Post independence the government has recognized its potential in educating the rural masses on the flagship programmes of the government. In fact the various government media units have been the most prominent to utilize traditional media as a communication tool for generating awareness among the people. Some of these units are:

- **Directorate of Field Publicity (DFP):** DFP is the largest rural-oriented inter-personal communication medium in the country engaged in the task of publicizing various programmes and policies of the government. It has a network of 207 Field Publicity Units under the control and supervision of 22 Regional Offices. The Directorate mainly conducts inter-personal communication through public meetings, seminars, photo exhibitions and live entertainment programmes to convey its messages to the people.
- **Song and Drama Division:** The Song and Drama Division is an independent media unit of the Ministry of Information and

Broadcasting to promote the resourceful live media, particularly the various folk forms of the country. It utilizes a variety of traditional performing arts like drama, folk and traditional plays, folk recitals, dance-drama and puppet shows besides the sound and light medium for creating awareness among the people about various programmes of socio-economic significance. The Division has ten Regional Centres and nine sub-centres across the country. It works in co-ordination with Director of Field Publicity, District Health Organizations, Family Welfare Departments, Nehru Yuva Kendras, Block Development Offices and various voluntary organizations.

Apart from the government media units, NGOs and SAGs (Social Action Groups) have been using traditional media for communicating developmental issues to the local masses. They utilize resources from within the community to facilitate active participation from the people. For instance; Sanskriti Sewa Sansthan, a theatre group from Uttar Pradesh performs various plays all across the state to generate awareness mainly about HIV AIDS. Similarly, the puppeteers of the Social Work and Research Centre at Rajasthan, widely known as Barefoot College (estd. 1972), have created a variety of glove puppets to communicate with the rural people on issues like health, education and human rights. A very popular puppet character among the people of Silora Block is *'Jokhim Chacha'*. He enjoys the privilege of an old wise man of 365 years who shares news and ideas and also engages the villagers in debates on social and community issues. Puppetry has been used in the past to disseminate information about health issues in the Nalbari Raas Mahotsav of Assam which attracts a large number of audience.



7.6 LET US SUM UP

- Traditional folk forms in India can be broadly classified into five categories – folk theatre, folksongs, narrative forms, religious discourses, puppet shows.

- Some varieties of regional folk theatres of India are Jatra, Bhaona, Nautanki, Therukoothu and Tamaasha
- There are over three hundred perceptible folksong styles in India like Bihu, Baul, Ghumar, Chakri etc. Shyam Parmar categorizes folksongs into – Bhakti songs, Ceremonial songs and Tribal songs
- Religious discourse is known by different names in different parts of the country – *Harikatha, Katha, Kirtan, Pravachan* and others.
- There are four basic types of puppets in India – glove puppet, rod puppet, string puppet and shadow puppet.
- The first five year plan of the Indian government projected that apart from the electronic media the rural people should be approached through folk media for disseminating information about various government schemes and policies.
- Traditional media are the most appropriate channels to change the attitude, behaviour and outlook of rural people about beliefs and practices that hamper the growth of the community.
- Directorate of Field Publicity is the largest rural-oriented inter-personal communication medium in the country engaged in the task of publicizing various programmes and policies of the government.
- The Song and Drama Division promote the resourceful live media, particularly the various folk forms of the country. It works in co-ordination with Director of Field Publicity, District Health Organizations, Family Welfare Departments, Nehru Yuva Kendras, Block Development Offices and various voluntary organizations.



7.7 FURTHER READING

1. Ghosh, Sampa, Banerjee, Utpal K. *Puppets in India and Abroad*. National Book Trust.
2. Kumar, Keval J. (2010) *Mass Communication in India*. Mumbai : Jaico Publishing House.
3. Parmar, Shyam (1975) *Traditional Folk Media in India*. Gekha Books.
4. Kumar, Shailendra. *Role of Folk Media in Nation Building*. Voice of Research , Vol 1, Issue 2, June 2012

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7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q No.1: (d) Maharashtra

Ans. to Q No.2: (b) North India

Ans. to Q No.3: False

Ans. to Q No.4: True

Ans. to Q No.5: (d) All of the above

Ans. to Q No.6: (c) It is a participatory media



7.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q.1: What is traditional media?

Q.2: Define rural development.

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1: Write short notes:

a) Role of traditional media during freedom movement

b) Jatra

Q.2: What is the role of DFP and the Song and Drama Division in the use of traditional media as a communication tool for generating awareness among the people?

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q.1: Explain the different forms of puppetry with suitable examples.

Q.2: Has the role of traditional media being over-shadowed by the rise in modern mass media? Justify your answer with the help of examples.

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