



## Traditional Media for Rural Development and Effective Communication

### KEYWORDS

Traditional Media (performing arts), Grass root and Effective Communication, Participatory Approach and rural development.

**Yathish.L.Kodavath**

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Folk Media & Communication Karnataka Folklore University, Gottagodi, Shiggaon.

**ABSTRACT** *This Paper is an attempt to identify the role of traditional media on rural development through effective communication. It identifies types of traditional communication channels available for rural development, it examines the effectiveness of these channels of communication, and establishes how messages are packaged and presented in performance.*

*Traditional media is one of the most important vehicles (intermedium) of social change and rural development. Traditional media can overcome the difficulties of language, speech, words and other barriers of communication like interest, Understanding, interpretation, attitude and perception. To information, to awareness, to education and to entertainment do not reach to a large majority of the people in rural and remote areas. The mass media has proved to be glamorous, impersonal and unbelievable. Thus, the modern media is not suitable for preserving cultural heritage and promotion of folk performing traditions and arts.*

*Traditional or folk media have been recognized as Grass root media. The effectiveness of traditional media in changing negative social and reproductive health behaviors in rural India is clear. Rural India is endowed with rich, popular means of communication, including traditional or folk songs, proverbs, storytelling, dancing, drama, poetry recital, arts and crafts. These popular media are used for such purposes as recreation, entertainment, ritual, ceremonies, communication (information), and religion. Furthermore, we believe that traditional media can be accommodated by contemporary theories of communication, education, and behavior change. The flexibility and participatory nature of traditional or folk media render any predetermined evaluation strategies almost inapplicable.*

### Introduction

The role of traditional or folk media has been very significant in Indian rural development after independence. Every human society has developed its traditional modes and channels of communication which characterize its existence, organization and development. That is, transmission of information from a point called origin or source to another called destination or receiver (audience), is the life wire of every society. No wonder people continue to marvel at the continued relevance of the Indian indigenous media; otherwise, known as Indian traditional folk media, in the contemporary world despite the manifestation of Marshall McLuhan's theory of "Global Village" in the contemporary world.

Many development planners in the Third World now appreciate the use of folk media as a mode of communication to explain development programmes. This may be because of the ineffectiveness of the modern mass media in reaching those at whom the messages are targeted. The first significant recognition of the traditional media in the communication and development strategies of the developing countries came in the year 1972 when the international parenthood federation and UNESCO organized a series of meetings in London relating to integrated use of traditional folk media in family planning communication programs. Before that after independence (1953) in India traditional media are used for give awareness about five years plan (Panchavarshika Yojana). Recent new media and technology are also involving in rural development.

The flexibility and participatory nature of traditional or folk media render any predetermined evaluation strategies almost inapplicable. Moreover, for community members to truly appreciate any change in behavior, they should be empowered to set their own indicators and determine in

their own way how these indicators will be measured and documented.

Contemporary theories of cognition and communication can be used to explain the role of folk media as complex, nonformula methods of educating people and changing behaviors. The function of folk media is consistent with Bandura's social learning (cognition) theory, which states that most behaviors are learned through modeling. This theory explains that vicarious learning from others is a powerful teacher of attitudes and behavior. Bandura believed that individuals learn not only in classrooms but also by observing role models in everyday life, including characters in movies and television programs likewise folk theater, folk performing arts.

Accordingly, folk media performers are role models from whom people learn. The various types of folk media are used as primers that provide the basis for residents of rural communities to discuss and diagnose their sociocultural and health situations and that enable them to take steps to find solutions to those problems. The role of folk media further subscribes to Rogers's communication and innovations theory, which explains how an innovation can be sustained within communities or groups of people after it has been adopted by the leadership of that community or group.

What are traditional media?

Folk media have various descriptors. The terms "oral media," "traditional media," and "informal media" have often been used interchangeably in referring to folk media. Ansu-Kyeremeh defines folk media as "any form of endogenous communication system which by virtue of its origin from, and integration into a specific culture, serves as a

channel for messages in a way and manner that requires the utilization of the values, symbols, institutions, and ethos of the host culture through its unique qualities and attributes." Folk media are often used for personal as well as group information sharing and discussion and draw their popularity from their entertaining nature.

#### **Characteristics of traditional media:**

The energy of the folklore is to be oral, so that *John Brand* said that, 'folklore is an oral tradition'. the folk is the collection of experience, optimize life and life style of our fore fathers, therefore it gives a flavor of the new area, so that *Prof.Richard* told that a folklore is voice of the primitive people. Our traditional life already included folklore and also it is a mirror to the modern life, so it put a light on the behavior of the people, their tradition, values and cause to make a change. Simplicity, trust, experience and solution of the problem are the main features of folklore. Therefore, it makes people to lead their life with cooperation.

The traditional folk art forms are used for moral, religious, and socio-political ends from the time they originated. We can find folklore tradition in villages very much, and this tradition is help full to aware people. This tradition has great influence on people because they can understand their culture of folklore very easily, so, that it has been used to create awareness among people in India.

#### **Strength & advantages of traditional media:**

Traditional folk media that cover the various performances that relates to express all events and facts, ideas & thoughts of the respective rural society through the presentation in the manner of pleasure & enjoyments. Although, traditional folk media, say what, are mostly come to us ridiculously or humorously as well. But, it does never mean that the traditional folk media has no effective message, which is incapable to influence or impact the rural audiences. The greatest advantage of the traditional folk media is that they are flexible in accommodating new themes. The impact of the folk media on the people is at a much deeper level. The folk media satisfies the inner need for self-expression in which all can participate.

On the contrary, it could be stressfully said, that the traditional folk media can mold or motivate the numerous unwarly and illiterate villagers effectively. It cater what for the rural people, are mostly in easy and understandable manner. It applies very common and widely used languages of the respective society which make any presentation understandable quickly.

As the performers of the traditional folk media, are all concerned to the respective rural society, can present various facts, difficulties, applicable resources for better output and out of the society in better manner. So, messages evolved from such rural media naturally, would serve the purpose of numerous backward rural people definitely. Beside this, as there is minimal accessibility to the mass media like, newspaper, radio and television in the rural society, so, major people's interests and emphasis is naturally lying on such traditional folk media predominantly. As the Traditional folk media, cater its major programmes through 'face to face presentations to the audiences, it can command the 'confidence' of them as well. It is true, that the traditional folk media have significant contribution towards bringing the success of many developmental programmes like 'Family Welfare', 'Children Education' etc, as undertaken by the government of the state. It also has inspired the rural people in adopting the latest techniques in cultivation as well. Traditional folk

media thus, can claim to be the 'mentor' of unaware and backward rural society. Modern mass media today, pay more attention and emphasis on the various enchanting as well as humorous programmes all, as catered by the traditional folk media with a view to further presentation in their channels. Presently, the television medium cater off and on, the programmes from 'traditional folk media' live-ly. It can be considered as the 'reward' paid to the 'Traditional folk media' for their dedication to the rural society people. Traditional folk media have considerable flexibility in comparison to other mass media that have.

#### **Development communication through traditional media:**

Some sociologists, educationists, psychologists and anthropologists have described the process of communication through various models. *Aristotle* says that all these three elements, i.e., speaker, speech and audience are essential for communication. These can be organized to study the process through the person who speaks, the speech he produces and the person/audience who listens. Such communication takes place in a face-to-face manner in traditional media.

During the freedom struggle, mass opinion was generated by incorporation themes of oppression by the British in every folk performing art form: songs, drama and dance, throughout the country. Today, central and state governments are using the very same art forms to convey ideas of old age pension, widow's welfare, national rural employment guarantee scheme, literacy, child labor, agricultural, family welfare, banking, education, awareness of HIV/AIDS, health and prohibition through concern government departments and also with the help of PrasaraBharthi's Song and Drama Division, Field and Publicity Department and Information and Publicity department.

In India the Government has been the biggest user of traditional media. The Directorate of Field Publicity and their State counterparts have employed these media to the maximum. The Song and Drama Division have supplemented modern communication efforts by offering live stage performances like puppet shows, folk theater, folk dances, ballads and sound-and-light shows. These programmes have been organized through departmental troupes and private parties registered with the Division and concern departments.

#### **Improve & strengthen traditional media:**

It is needless to say, that the folk media have been appeared and stood as the most important as well as an indispensable medium for the rural society. It reflects the unwarly life-style and in advanced living condition of rural people, with a view to open their eyes and developing their mind and attitude as well. The traditional folk media speak all about the village life with the aid of their insufficient ability and poor performances. In their presentations catered what, are conventional and lack many current or updated information's, that do not match to the present to other medium of mass communication can provide to the masses. The objectivity of forming such organization was to facilitate necessary training and education with developed ideas and thoughts in this regard. Beyond this, the communicator, would require to perform an important role in enhancing the 'ideals and mission' of folk media, with a view to achieving the required progress and prosperity for the rural society of India. For this purpose, a communicator must be aware of these points, as mentioned below;

- He must maintain a balance between 'entertainment' and 'messages', by avoiding exaggerated content materials.
- He should be objective more, rather than descriptive unnecessarily.
- He should be well cautious and keep watch on the current happenings around him.
- He must try to improve the quality of messages, that would need to deliver to the audience and should be so, correctly.
  
- Selection of deliverable messages or contents to the audiences, that are available so many, is an important job of the communicator. So, the communicator would require performing the same very keenly and competently, with a view to making the applied efforts and time to such presentation, being successful as well.
- Communicator's delivered message should be concise, specific, objectful and understandable to the audiences over all.

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