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## **Folk Media as an Instrument of Rural Development and Social Change**

**Rajesh**

Research scholar, Ethiraj College for Women, Chennai

### **ABSTRACT:**

Folk media has historically played a vital role in rural societies by combining entertainment with education and social awareness. In a diverse and multilingual country like India, where rural masses form the majority of the population, folk traditions such as Tamasha, Bhajan, Kirtan, Dhandhar, and Quawwali serve as effective tools for mobilizing people towards government development programmes. Unlike modern mass media, folk forms are deeply rooted in local culture, customs, and traditions, making them accessible and relatable. The present study conducted in three villages of Nagpur district, Maharashtra, analyses the perception of rural audiences towards traditional media, their preferences for themes, and the effectiveness of these media in supporting social development initiatives. Findings reveal that folk media continues to entertain, build community solidarity, and communicate developmental messages effectively, thereby supplementing government programmes in areas like health, agriculture, literacy, and social reform.

**KEYWORDS:-** Folk Media, Rural Development, Traditional Communication, Social Change, Tamasha, Bhajan, Kirtan, Maharashtra.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

To motivate the rural masses to participate in development programmes that are carried out by the government at the national, state, and local levels, it is essential to have an understanding of folk institutions, as well as their habits, customs, traditions, and culture. This understanding serves as essential instruments within the context of the process. The goal of these programmes is to make improvements, and they are carried out at the national, state, and municipal levels. There are three levels of government that are accountable for the execution of these initiatives: the national, the state, and the local. One country that is expanding in size is India, which is characterised by its multilingualism and variety, and where the peasants constitutes the largest segment of the population. These characteristics describe India. It is especially important to keep this in mind in a country that is growing in size. Additionally, the various development organisations provide helpful techniques for the improvement of the general population as well as for the execution of national reconstruction projects, particularly in developing nations like India. These strategies are particularly helpful in the construction of national infrastructure. In India, these strategies have proven to be very successful. Taking these strategies into consideration is highly advantageous. When taking into account the situation in India, it is extremely beneficial to take into mind various techniques like these. We are provided with a critical instrument that we may use in the process of



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influencing rural people to embrace social changes that are being implemented by a variety of development organisations. This instrument is the folk media. There are a variety of different institutions that are responsible for bringing about this shift. We are able to make use of this useful equipment that we have available to us. Within the realm of folk media, this specific instrument serves as a representation. Throughout the entirety of its existence, the study of folklore has been linked to a wide range of topics that are significant to both particular nations and the world as a whole. It is possible to trace the roots of this connection all the way back to the times when the industry was first established.

Due to the fact that this kind of investigation has the potential to provide insight into the manner in which people's minds operate and the activities that they engage in, it is possible that a comprehensive and scientific investigation of folk media in developing nations might be of significant use. Since this is the case, it is possible that carrying out such a study would be of great benefit. One of the reasons for this observation is that this kind of inquiry has the potential to produce information. This is one of the reasons. That information acts as a crucial instrument for the formulation of policies that would motivate people to proceed in the desired direction and bring about social progress as a self-developing process in rural regions, and it is used by those who are responsible for formulating policies and planning these policies. For the purpose of formulating policy, this knowledge is absolutely necessary.

Folk media do, in fact, play a part in supporting the process of nation building, as well as in assisting with socio-economic progress and modernization. A further assertion that he makes is that folk media have a purpose in society. As a direct result of this choice, those who live in more remote places will find that the method is far more accessible to them and that they are more likely to adopt it. When it comes to the process of social change, the traditional media have a function that is both effective and efficient, and they have a significant amount of potential that they can employ. In addition, they have the ability to use this potential successfully. A further point to consider is that they possess a substantial degree of potential. They also have a big amount of potential that they possess, which is an additional point to consider. They have the potential to be some of the most powerful communication tools available, provided that they are employed in the appropriate manner. On the other hand, this is dependent on the fact that they are put to use. As a result of the circumstances that are now in place, they are engaged in this manner.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Arora et al. (2012).** To create media experiences that are both entertaining and meaningful for underserved communities, it is necessary to tap into local resources while planning digital literacy material. This research delves into the socio-cognitive aspects of a new edutainment product that was developed in rural India as part of an e-development effort financed by Hewlett-Packard and how it affected learning. With folk themes native to the area, this product encompasses several



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types of media, including text, audio, and visual, all with a focus on social awareness. It makes use of the karaoke "same language subtitling" function, which was honoured with the 2002 World Bank Development Marketplace Award for its unique and straightforward usage in enhancing reading abilities. Through its entertainment value, the product aspires to bring together cultural regeneration, value-based education, incidental literacy, and language practise. Emotional appeal, multimodal stimulation, interaction, contextual content, and local representation are some of the aspects examined in this product's approach to engagement and empowerment in this article. Anyone working in the field or studying the topic of creating new forms of educational entertainment for marginalised groups on a global scale would find this information valuable.

**Cofie et al. (2013).** The research looked at Nouna, Burkina Faso, and how a community-based health insurance (CHI) programme was impacted by IEC campaign efforts. The report also detailed the elements that contributed to or detracted from the campaign's success. We employed methods that were complementary to one another to gather data. Field observations, group discussions with the project management team, in-depth interviews with 22 community leaders (chosen at random), and a survey of 250 household heads were all part of the research process. To determine whether there was a correlation between campaign exposure at home and either knowledge acquisition or enrollment, researchers employed multivariate logistic regression models and bivariate analysis. While home enrollment in the scheme was somewhat affected by the IEC effort, household understanding about the CHI was positively impacted. Community heads' involvement in the promotion of the CHI scheme and the use of mass and interpersonal media channels (such as the radio, a mobile information van, and the CHI team) to disseminate consistent and regular IEC messages were the two most important factors in the strategy's success. Among the socio-demographic factors that affected household heads' awareness and enrollment, only education had a substantial impact. Future evaluations of CHI campaigns should account for other significant IEC mediating variables, as the IEC campaign did not have a very strong impact on CHI enrollment. Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that IEC campaigns be included in scheme designs and assessments to enhance enrollment by promoting a better understanding of the CHI scheme idea.

**Gavaravarapu et al. (2019).** It is becoming increasingly important to incorporate nutritional considerations into developmental strategies and governance in India, as undernutrition is accompanied by overweight/obesity, related non-communicable illnesses, and micronutrient deficiencies. While several initiatives have been launched in India to combat malnutrition, there is a noticeable absence of coordination and collaboration among these programmes. To go from a malnourished India to a malnutrition-free India, effective nutrition communication may play a significant role in fostering the necessary synergy. While many national nutrition plans acknowledge the importance of nutrition education and communication, there is little evidence of



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separate assessment of these components. Nutrition education and communication have received very little attention in the field of community nutrition research. There is a lack of published literature on the topic of nutrition promotion, despite some attempts to experiment with innovative communication tactics and media. With an emphasis on India, this study aims to critically assess the research and practise of nutrition education and communication. An examination of the methodologies, media, methods, and technologies utilised in nutrition education and communication research projects and programmes, together with a historical perspective on their history, are presented in this study. The analysis also highlights the lessons learned from these endeavours.

**Sultana et al. (2021).** Contemporary methods of data visualisation and communication in human-computer interaction run the danger of marginalising communities because they put an emphasis on scientific rationalism. Communities in the global south with low literacy rates may find it particularly difficult to engage with data and computers due to ideological hegemony. We learned about the ways rural practitioners of Nakshi-Katha, Hindu Idol, and witchcraft keep records, tell social and religious stories, and make decisions with the help of information through an ethnographic study that lasted six months. We discover that conventional methods of data presentation and communication frequently employ physical objects as representational units, establishing links between the cultural practises of designers and the actual site. To go a step further, we pinpoint the medium's substantial impact on the meaning-making process. Community members frequently carry these practises and norms down over the generations. In this paper, we'll go over the ways in which this rural tradition differs from modern information communication practises. We'll also talk about how learning about traditional ways of representing information can help us create modern tools and technologies that are more accessible and culturally appropriate for rural communities like Bangladesh.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Locale of the study

It is essential for the researcher conducting this type of study to be well-versed in the local language, culture, beliefs, and attitudes. The researcher's familiarity with the local language, geography, culture, and customs led to a deliberate selection of the Nagpur district in the Indian state of Maharashtra.

#### 3.1. Sampling plan

##### Selection of villages

The following criteria were used to intentionally choose three villages:

- i) To ensure the authenticity and lack of contamination of traditional media, villages were located at least 15-20 kms. distant from the metropolis.
- ii) Regular performances of traditional media like as Qawwali, Bhajan, Kirtan, and Tamasha;



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iii) An adequate number of traditional media shows were broadcast in the year preceding the examination. In addition, the pilot research confirmed that they were well-received by the locals. Lastly, the study's participants were chosen with purpose from the villages of Ghorad, Budhala, and Kaniyadhhol.

- **Selection of respondent**

To ensure a fair and unbiased sample, we used a random sampling technique that involved drawing names from a hat in order to get sixty respondents from each of the chosen villages. It was discovered that all 180 participants are avid followers of traditional music forms including as tamasha, bhajan, kirtan, dhandhar, and quwwali. However, the sample did include several government agencies that use traditional media for social development work. These agencies include the District Health Office in Nagpur, Darubandi Prasar Mahiti Kendra (the centre for anti-alcohol publicity), District Saksharata Abhiyan Samiti (literacy mission) in Nagpur, Taluka Saksharata Abhiyan Samiti in Kalmeshwar, and Nagpur Doordarshan Kendra (the television centre) in Nagpur.

- **Semi-structured interview schedule**

In order to gather information from the viewers about communication, situational characteristics, and perception, two semi-structured participatory interview schedules were created. These schedules covered different aspects of the folk media and its role in the area, as well as the concerned government officials. The objectives of the study, results of the pilot study, expert guidance, and general observations were taken into consideration during their preparation. Twenty viewer-respondents served as pilots for the schedules in a single community. This did not constitute part of the sample. After conducting preliminary testing, we refined the schedules and translated them into Marathi, the language spoken by the people of Maharashtra, to remove unnecessary questions and replace them with those that were really necessary.

- **Sources of Information**

Using semi-structured interview schedules, we gathered data from all respondents through both individual and group interviews conducted in person. Additionally, the investigator made note of his personal findings.

- **Statistical method**

Simple statistical methods such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyse the acquired data.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

### ❖ **Perception of the viewers about different aspects and nature of the traditional media**

We were able to determine the audience's pattern of viewing of Tamasha, Bhajan, Kirtan, Drama, and Dhan Dhar based on factors such as location, event, organiser, and topic. Table 1 displays the results.





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According to table 1, a significant portion of the respondents were either Bhajan (59.94%) or Tamasha (71.59%). A smaller percentage of people visited Kirtan (29.97%), Dhandhar (16.65%), and Quawally (8.33%). More and more Tamasha and Bhajan programmes were being put on, which contributed to their popularity. The hamlet itself was the most popular spot to watch traditional media, with ratings ranging from 71.59% to 100%. When a renowned ensemble played at the Tehsil (block) level, somewhat more than a quarter of the audience went to watch Tamasha. Consequently, for the most engagement and effect, such performances should take place within the community. Additionally, as shown in Table 1, the majority of Dhandhar (100%), Tamasha (77.22%), and Kirtan (76.44%) performances occurred during the Diwali festival. For Bhajan (69.69%) and Quawally (40.02%), the situation was same. Around twenty-one percent of people who took the survey noted that bhajans were organised during the Navratras. People are more open to spiritual activities and gatherings like this at that time. During Ganesh mahostav, fewer conventional media shows were planned, ranging from 7.0% to 11.77%. According to 60% of people who took the survey, the most exciting part of the Makar sankranti (Indian festival) was Quawally. The organisers were a group of dedicated villagers who showed initiative in planning and carrying out the program's activities in a systematic and successful manner, as shown in Table 4. One hundred percent of the respondents said that the interested villagers were responsible for organising Bhajan, Kirtan, Quawally, and Dhandhar through the traditional media shows of the village. Following closely after was Dhandhar with 88% of viewers perceiving coverage of leisure and amusement topics. Tamasha came in second with 88%. Kirtan (89.76%) and Bhajan (97.65%) both have religious overtones. There is a lot of untapped potential in rural areas for the entertainment cum information medium that Tamasha represents, and its popularity reflects that.

## ❖ Most liked traditional media

People who saw the show were asked which conventional media they favoured and why. Table 2 displays and lists them all.

The results demonstrate that the majority of viewers (61.61 percent) supported Tamasha. The conventional media was unquestionably the most well-liked. The top two reasons given by the 111 viewers who ranked Tamasha as the best show were the engaging performances (40.50 percent) and the topical stories or themes (22.70%). The narrative of Tamasha, which is based on the current situation and has dynamic performances, was found to be the most appreciated. Extra care must be used with this discovery. Artists putting in Tamasha events need nothing less than complete backing in the shape of training, financial aid, and accolades. It is possible to reach every farmer in Maharashtra by training them in social development subjects like agricultural development.

Some viewers (46.62 percent) said that Bhajan was the most beloved traditional media of all time. The reasons cited by them were that the material dealt with well-known religious subjects (85.68 percent) and that the vocalist had a pleasant voice (10.11%). Many rural viewers have strong



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religious beliefs, according to the research. Traditional media for agricultural development should be planned with care to protect their religious beliefs. The topics spoken at these get-togethers should not be harmful or provocative. Among traditional media, over a quarter of viewers (26.64 percent) rated Kirtan as their favourite. The reasons stated by them were stories or content based on current topics (31.25%), and content addressing recognisable religious themes (43.68%). Kirtan is often the first activity in an extension project, particularly one aimed at women. Lots of ladies come for meetings because of it. Based on this outcome, the same approach may be taken by male farmers. Dhandhar was the most beloved traditional media by a small percentage of viewers (6.67 percent). Viewers cited dynamic performances, synchronisation of the singer's voice and instrument beat, and the absence of vulgarity in the text as reasons (25 percent for each argument), all of which were connected to religious themes. However, research revealed that Dhandhar had a remarkably low viewership. Its low profile may be attributable to the fact that no such initiatives are available in the region. Only 6.11 percent of those who saw the show thought Quawwali was the best traditional news source. Two of the reasons given were the singer's lovely voice (72.73%) and the presenting manner, which was described as colourful (27.27%). They did not hold quawwali in high regard as a traditional form of media, and it is doubtful that it could effectively convey developmental messages.

## ❖ Preference for the themes of traditional media

Traditional media topics was polled to determine audience choice. In Table 3, you can see the themes listed in the order of their preference.

The percentage is in brackets. In terms of overall preference, patriotic songs came in second with 501 points, while social development themes, including agriculture, came in first with 522 points. The heroes of patriotic music are those who gave their lives for the sake of their nation, either to defend it or to help it progress. Recreation and amusement ranked third with a total score of 363. With an aggregate score of 177, political themes were the fourth most popular, followed closely by religious themes (171 each) and the history of freedom fighters (176).

## ❖ Steps followed in organizing traditional media show

Those in charge of the conventional media show polled the audience to find out what happened next in terms of planning. An average score was calculated and organised in ascending order based on their response. Table 4 displays the information.

Money collecting (1.67 average score), location selection (2.07 average score), and programme publicity (3.12 average score) were the phases in the organisers' sequence for the traditional media show. Following completion of the first three procedures, the organisers contacted the performers (4.32 average score), made plans to construct a stage (5.07 average score), and then arranged seating for the audience (6.17 average score). The following procedure has to be followed in order to organise any conventional media show in the rural region, as confirmed. The results demonstrate



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that there are at least six phases involved in organising a traditional media display in the village itself.

## ❖ Viewers' purpose served by the traditional media show

The survey inquired as to the level of contentment and the perceived value of conventional media shows. In Table 3, you can see the list of these purposes that were fulfilled.

Based on the data in Table 5, it is clear that the show's intended purpose was to entertain (54.95 percent), foster a sense of "we" (36.63%), satisfy an urge (8.33 percent), connect with others who shared their interests (6.67%), and relax (3.33%). One way to look at it is that conventional media presentations are still interactive performances that teach and amuse their audiences.

## ❖ Opinion of the Government organizations about effectiveness of the traditional media for social development

In comparison to other forms of media, nearly all government officials believe that traditional media projects are more successful and have a positive influence on the rural people. The fact that the performances are live and in the local language helps bring the audience closer to the performers, which is a major factor in the program's popularity. Because villagers are more likely to identify with traditional folk forms, officials believe that a hybrid of traditional and mass media will work better in rural regions.

## 5. CONCLUSION:

The study demonstrates that folk media remains a powerful and relevant medium of communication in rural India. Tamasha and Bhajan emerged as the most popular forms, valued for their dynamic performances and religious content, while Kirtan proved effective in mobilizing women and men for developmental discussions. Themes of agriculture, social development, and patriotism were highly preferred by audiences, showing their openness to progressive ideas when presented in familiar cultural formats. Government officials acknowledged folk media's effectiveness in comparison to modern mass media due to its live, interactive, and localized nature. The findings indicate that rural communities not only perceive traditional media as entertainment but also as a platform for collective identity, learning, and social bonding. Thus, folk media serves dual functions—preserving cultural heritage and driving socio-economic modernization. For policy planners and development agencies, integrating folk performances with modern mass communication can enhance the reach and acceptance of developmental programmes. The study affirms that when used strategically, folk media can continue to be a bridge between tradition and progress, making social change more inclusive and sustainable

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