UNIT 10  FOLK AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

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10.0 INTRODUCTION

You have so far learnt about the diverse areas of development communication and the stakeholders involved in them who also play a role in development planning. So while you have begun to appreciate the role of private and public sectors, NGOs and development agencies and grass root level agencies like Panchayati Raj, you would have also realised that development communication cannot bring about the desired change without the potent tool of media. While this block introduces you to different media which are used as vehicles of development, this unit in particular focuses on folk and traditional media.

10.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:
- Appreciate the role of folk and traditional media in development communication;
- Describe the different types of folk and traditional media;
- Analyse the social change and community empowerment through participatory methods; and
Use folk and traditional media in different areas of development communication.

10.2 WHAT IS FOLK AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA?

Folk and traditional media are the oldest tools of development in societies at various levels of progress. The uniqueness of this media is that it involves people’s participation to the maximum. The folk media make use of varying combinations of performing arts like village drama, rural dance and folk songs which are unique to a certain community and society. This belongingness to a community gives the folk form a distinct identity of its own. Though the folk art and music of different states of India are distinct, they have some common bearing among them. The names according to the community background keep changing from one community to another. For example, we have “Bihu” dance form in Assam and we have “Kathakali” in Kerala. The culture of a particular community or a geographical region is significantly depicted in its folk forms. This cultural diversity is also a depiction of the Indian diversity.

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. To understand the colourful diversity and unity of India, it is important to see the folk theatre in its natural settings.”

10.3 HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF FOLK AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Rural India is rich in folk art forms and they have penetrated deep into the social fabric of the villages. This hold on the community’s pulse has made it an avid medium of information dissemination, self expression and has also helped in preserving our rich cultural heritage. Every region has its folk and traditional media forms which are immensely popular and relevant to the particular community or population. This has also added to the historical importance of this unique media form.

The following sections would throw light on different aspects of folk and traditional media.

10.3.1 Emergence and Development (World and Indian Level)

The folk and traditional art forms were initially used as a medium for communication in Philippines and London which was formally identified by communication scholars in a UNESCO conference. The modern folk and traditional media evolved from primitive art forms and when humans progressed with time, the art forms also progressed. When we trace the history of folk arts it leads us back to BC 2000 – BC 1000. Indian scholars claim that the folk art forms in the Indian subcontinent are older than BC10000. When the human thought process started to evolve more aesthetically, the use of folk art forms was also found to be used for self expression or satisfying people’s feelings.
In the Indian context, the use of folk and traditional media for development communication are widely known and accepted, even though the folk art forms were an integral part of religious message dissemination. Tracing back the history of traditional folk art forms, it was evident that they have been used for communication from the time of their advent but from the 20th century onwards, they became widely used as a tool of communication for development. Not only in India but also many other third world countries they have been used as tools upliftment of a particular community with greater participation. Time and again it has been proved that folk media could play an integral role in social change and its use can bring a sense of intimacy, variety and virility to people. Historically, religious communication or dissemination of rituals was the main content of these folk arts. It was only later that communication scholars could identify the development potential of these media in rural communities. The Indian freedom struggle also made use of songs, ballads, folk plays and a variety of folk forms to inspire people. For example Dr B R Ambedkar’s followers SatyashodhakSamaj used Tamasha as a powerful media for social reform. The folk and traditional media have played a great role in the lives of Indians throughout the history of India.

10.3.2 Strength of the Folk and Traditional Media

The strength of this form of media is that wherever it exists, it is the oldest and most loved media for the people. The reach of the folk media is also significant as it has the potential to penetrate deep into the community and the community members identify with them. People’s participation in folk forms is another strength as it not only ensures ease of understanding of the content, it also leaves a deep impact on the minds of the community members.

Here are a few specific strengths that these media forms enjoy over the conventional mass media:

- **Community intimacy**: Each community or ethnic group of society has at least some folk and traditional media which they have practiced over generations in their community and are a part of their culture, rituals and ideologies. So it also becomes emotionally connected to the community members.

- **Tool for development communication**: Being close to the community, they are a successful tool to be implemented in all development related communication, activities and campaigns. The folk media makes issue based intervention possible.

- **Credibility**: These media being a part of the socio-cultural fabric of the community, enjoy greater credibility in the eyes of the audiences or community members. The community participation in these media is also high. All these features are missing in the conventional mass media.

- **Regional/Community variations**: All communities are not homogeneous in nature. Different communities have different characteristic features in view of their socio-cultural norms, festivals, ethnicity, etc. The folk and traditional media also keep changing to adapt to the ethos of different communities. Each form of folk art has a certain amount of indigenous content in it which could be hard to relate to for someone outside the
community. Specific community cultural background reflection can provide a strong feeling of togetherness which facilitates the ease of communication to the members of a community.

- **Community participation**: folk and traditional media involve high community participation. People who perform the folk are mostly from the same community. This goes a long way in percolation of communication messages and creates ambassadors of the messages from among the community members. Use of common language or content which the members identify with in real life situations also creates higher chances of acceptability of the community messages.

- **Use of non-verbal language**: Folk media, by its nature, makes use of non-verbal or body language. For example, to understand the Kathakali art form, one must understand the ‘Mudras’ because each one of them denotes something. Locally known non-verbal communication techniques may be included in most folk media.

- **Performance-oriented**: most of the folk and traditional media are based on human performance which makes it much more effective for its target audience.

### 10.3.3 Limitations of Folk and Traditional Media

There are some limitations of this age-old community media. These are discussed below:

- **Limited reach**: the folk and traditional media have limited reach. Though it is a very good media of group communication, it can only reach those who are present at the time of performance to view it. So despite being effective, its reach is limited.

- **Need of an individual approach**: The folk and traditional media cannot be studied individually like other media, for eg. TV or radio. This is because each folk medium’s characteristics are very different from the other folk media which do not allow them to be clubbed together for study or policy making. Each will have to be taken into account individually.

- **Unorganised Workspace**: folk media mostly work in an unorganised setup which is challenging its existence especially when compared to conventional media as a competitor.

- **Lack of advancement**: Societies are seeing a high level of technological advancement in all sectors. But folk and traditional media lack it. Without technology, there is a huge chunk of population which is not reached by folk forms. This may account for its decreasing popularity.

### Check Your Progress 1

**Note:**
1) Use the space below for your answers.
2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. What is folk and traditional media?
2. What are the strengths and limitations of folk media?

10.4 ROLE OF FOLK AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

Communication is not merely used for transferring information from one person to another, it is used for many other purposes. It is frequently used as a tool to facilitate the people’s participation in several developmental activities. Such a form of communication is widely known as development communication. According to American Communication Theorist and Sociologist Everett Rogers, Development communication is the one where communication and its uses are put together for further development. Thus, development communication is an approach used wherein communities are provided with useful information for betterment of their lives. Development communication has two primary roles, 1) Transforming role - where it aids social change in line with the present generations’ requirement in a competitive market 2) Socializing role – by trying and maintaining few established values in the current society.

Developing countries comprise 90% of the world’s population out of which 70% live in rural villages. This particular rural population is still very far from receiving services like newspapers, internet and the television facilities effectively. In addition to this, high levels of illiteracy hampers the development of approximately 80% of India’s rural population. Owing to this, in many parts of rural India, art is still an integral part of the process of living in traditional societies even today. Thus, traditional and folk media play a crucial role in communicating with the people, including various developments and modern messages. They can be effective mass media for preventing the tribal and the illiterates from continuous exploitation, as they do not understand the language of modern communication. Folk forms in India have a marked significance in rural communities. Natives in remote tribal and rural areas of India do not have a facility to access the modern media and hence it does not reach these target groups effectively. In such places, folk forms of communication can find their way and help & contribute immensely in dissemination of the messages otherwise emitted by the electronic media.

Wherever print and electronic media are not accessible, local media is the only form of communication. Such media forms are always contextual and referential. Previous knowledge is often updated and validated through lively art work and
craft. Wisdom, humour and wit are the basic elements of all traditional media forms thereby making it easier and effective to address people and interact with them. There is content clarity which facilitates learning and understanding due to active and direct communication. Thus the traditional media forms become impact oriented. Traditional media voices the aspirations, dreams, concerns, collective desires, worries, miseries and sufferings of the people thereby acting as a collective pressure forum. It thus empowers people and prompts them to express fearlessly and freely. It also aims at building consciousness on various issues. To summarize, traditional media works in imparting knowledge and information, providing entertainment alongside creating awareness, providing methodology to impart training and then validate, a vehicle of social change, a clarion call to co-exist in civil societies and helps in acceleration of processes leading to betterment.

**10.5 DIFFERENT TYPES OF FOLK AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA**

Folk media is the language of expression of communities that they are most comfortable voicing their concerns in. At the grass root level, through community participation, it is able to bring out the dominant ideologies of the people. Depending on the different regions of the country, the folk media in India are of various kinds. They can broadly be classified into folk theatre, folk music, folk dance, puppetry, storytelling and sculptures and paintings. In different states, each folk form is differently known and may have different features. Let us know about these traditional folk media briefly.

1) **Folk Dance:** Every geographical area has a different folk dance which is the most popular folk form of the respective area and is usually a mix of folk songs and folk tales are narrated through them. It is performed mainly at community get-togethers. For eg. Garba in Gujarat, Manjira and Swang in Haryana, Yakshagana in Karnataka and Ghoomar in Rajasthan are all folk dances of the respective areas.

2) **Folk Music:** Folk music is also a popular folk form accompanied by some musical instruments. People usually gather in groups and sing folk songs. The songs are generally reflective of the culture, lifestyle and oral literature of the communities and sometimes they are a satirical comment on the government. For eg. Kajari is the folk music of UP, Bihu of Assam, Babul and Bhatiali of Bengal.

3) **Street Theatre:** is a vital folk performance media tool and is an effective tool of communicating socio political messages and speaking loud and clear on issues that common people identify with. They are powerful tools of community mobilization on issues of common interests. Due to its effectiveness, it has also come to the urban areas and is a popular art form among students and theatre lovers. For eg. Nautanki is the folk theatre of UP, MP and Punjab, Pala Jatra of Orissa and Bengal while Bidesia is of Bihar.

4) **Puppetry:** Puppetry is a creative portrayal of stories, social issues or any matter that has to be conveyed with some context. Puppetry largely depicts a popular legend, folk tale or story and generally ends with a moral/social
message. They are popular among people of all age groups. There are four main kinds of puppets –

- String puppets – manipulated by strings
- Rod puppets – make use of tall bamboos
- Shadow puppets – these are flat figures illuminated from behind and create shadows that fall on a transparent screen.
- Hand/glove puppets - These make use of a large flat screen with strong light on it and are made by manipulation of palms and fingers.

5. **Storytelling:** It is more theatrical in nature with rhythmic language used for narrating the story. The stories are usually legends or folktales and sometimes also have historic and religious background to them. Colourful costumes and musical instruments add a unique hue to these storytelling performances. At times, it also takes the form of ballad singing.

For eg. Rajasthan has Prithviraj Raso, UP and MP have Alha, Maharashtra has Powada and Tamil Nadu has Villupattu.

6. **Sculpting and Painting:** Sculpting and painting are one of the ancient arts. Others in this category comprise pottery, weaving, metallurgy and textile arts. While the oldest sculptures in the country date back to the Indus Valley civilization, the oldest paintings or drawings are also of the Stone age, the oldest we know of is Bhimbekta in Madhya Pradesh. These were mediums of expression for nomadic tribes and ethnic groups. The subjects of such sculptures and paintings are derived from religion, mythology and nature.

Eg. We have Madhubani paintings in Bihar, Tanjore or Thanjavur paintings in Tamil Nadu, Patta Chitra in Odisha and Warli paintings in Maharashtra.

### 10.6 **SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH FOLK AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA**

#### 10.6.1 Rural Development

Rural Development is often known to be about the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas, often relatively isolated and sparsely populated. Rural development is a comprehensive term which often emphasizes on action for the development of areas apart from the mainstream urban economic system.

India has a rich, vast and varied culture in which modern mass media alone does not constitute all the available communication channels. Due to poverty and illiteracy, thousands of people do not have regular access to such mass media. With 35 percent of the population unlettered and with the media’s reach largely restricted to urban areas, information, education & entertainment do not reach a large majority of the people. To them, the mass media proved to be glamorous, impersonal and unbelievable in comparison with the familiar performance of traditional artists whom the villagers could not only see and hear but even touch emotionally. Various forms of folk and traditional media can be utilized to reach different sections of people to bring change and development of the nation. Folk and traditional media have an influence to a great extent on rural society due to
their acceptable idioms, functional significance and entertainment component. Largely folk media can eliminate the difficulty of language, speech, words and certain other barriers of communication like, interest, understanding, interpretation, attitude and perception. Traditional folk media is the most crucial vehicle for social change. While conveying social and agricultural messages a lot of modification may be needed but it is not true in the case of traditional media. Traditional and folk media can easily and efficiently carry social issues related to rural development. Currently, both the traditional and modern forms of media complement each other. There is a need to keep our traditional media alive and active by continuously and cautiously using it while blending it along with the modern media. Documenting traditional and folk media will not only help in preserving and transmitting our culture, tradition and values to the next generation but also help in boosting developmental activities.

The growth of rural activities is not only essential for the citizens living in rural India but is necessary to stimulate the speed of overall economic expansion of the nation.

In the process of the evolution of the nation rural development is pretended to be of noticeable importance in the country today than in the olden days. The process is a strategy trying to achieve improved rural productivity, higher socio-economic equality, and stability in social and economic development.

**10.6.2 Community Development**

The United Nations defines community development as “a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems”. It is a broad concept, applied to the practices of various sections of the society to improve various aspects of communities, who typically aim to build stronger and more resilient local communities.

Community development is also understood as a professional discipline, and is defined by the International Association for Community Development as “a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organization, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings”.

Community development deals with empowering individuals and groups of people with certain skills required to bring change within their communities. These kinds of skills are mostly created through the formation of social groups which work for a common agenda. Community developers must learn the know-how of the working techniques with individuals.

In reality, community development supports communities, of place and identity, to use their own assets to improve the quality of community life. Also, it helps communities and public agencies to work together to improve services and the way in which decisions are made.

“Community development is fundamentally based on the values of human rights, social justice, equality and respect for diversity”.
According to the National Association of Community Development Extension professionals community development is defined as “a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, equality, economic opportunity and social justice, through the organization, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings”.

10.6.3 Tools for Social Mobilization

Social mobilization is an integrative process where stakeholders are stimulated to become active participants in social change, using diverse strategies to meet shared goals. The process is concerned with mobilizing human and financial resources through five main approaches, namely political mobilization, community mobilization, government mobilization, corporate mobilization and beneficiary mobilization. Partnership building and networking, community participation, media and special events to raise public awareness and advocacy to mobilize resources and effect policy change are some of the key elements of social mobilization. There are several tools for social mobilization but some of the conventional tools for social mobilization are as follows:

- Social networks
- Collaborative working groups
- Newsletter
- Mailing list and SMS
- Blogs
- Petitions and surveys
- Personal impact calculators
- Videos
- Individual stories

Check Your Progress 2

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. What are the different types of folk and traditional media?

2. Explain the tools used for social mobilization in the present times.
Participatory approaches seek a way of empowering a wide range of communities by bringing about awareness, knowledge and understanding, alongside bringing a sense of ownership too which leads to a sustainable change. The catchword in participatory approaches is “participation” - getting community partners in development programmes to take active roles in identified activities, such as decision-making for planning and implementation. Participatory approaches aim to achieve the following:

1) Provide local support to various programs, which includes the involvement of local leadership too
2) Voluntary generation of ideas and interventions by community members
3) Participation in decision making by the disadvantaged groups in the society, particularly women
4) Ownership of programs by community members
5) Community organizational structures for the management of interventions
6) An educational process to generate and sustain participation
7) Integration of activities – hardware and software
8) Removal of obstacles to collaboration: attitudes, beliefs and behaviors
9) The training of local community animators.

The unique difference between participatory and other approaches is that participatory approaches are non-directive in nature. For example, when a participatory approach is applied to sanitation and hygiene behavior change, the following aspects are usually emphasized:

1) Providing guidance to community members in making their own decisions
2) Helping communities explore and generate self-information for decision making
3) Encouraging self-reliance and self-direction, through a sense of shared-ownership
4) Nurturing communities to monitor and review their own progress
5) Strengthening community resourcefulness
6) Allowing the community to decide their pace of activities and respective time frame
7) Promoting the concept of learning by doing- Overcoming uncertainty through experience gained and success acquired over time

The success of participatory approaches in community empowerment depends on a wide range of factors. Some of them include advocacy to create an enabling institutional environment, right strategies for program implementation by policy makers, effective tackling of social aspects like gender stereotypes and education background, ensuring proper funds and resource availability, initiating a pilot project to explain how effective could the approach be, realistic time frame to build up capacity to adapt and use the approach etc. It is also important to establish an evaluation and monitoring mechanism to ensure the right direction.
Examples of Participatory Approaches:

Many participatory approaches have evolved over time. They are designed to augment participation through proper and meaningful decision making, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of different activities. These approaches are sensitive to existing situations; they draw answers out of communities, rather than attempting to impose preconceived notions. Few of the examples are mentioned below –

1. PHAST – Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation

   This is an innovative approach to promote hygiene, community management of water and sanitation facilities adapted from the SARAR (refer to point 2) methodology wherein people build their innate ability to address and resolve their own problems. PHAST aims to promote health awareness and thereby empower communities to control sanitation related diseases and improve their water management. This approach is jointly developed by and promoted by UNDP-World bank, UNICEF and WHO.

2. SARAR – Stands for Self-esteem, Associative strengths, Resourcefulness, Action-planning and Responsibility. The PHAST approach is also based on this methodology. It was developed during 1970’s and 1980’s.

3. Participatory Rural Appraisal - PRA is a process of participation with the villagers in which rapport-building paves the way for them to perform their own analysis and to express themselves whether by means of ‘verbals’ like narration or ‘visuals’ such as making a map.

10.7 EDUCATIONAL EXPERIMENTS THROUGH FOLKS

In the previous sections we talked about how folk media is linked with the culture of a community or an ethnic group. Education ultimately is to prepare our children to understand, live in and contribute to their culture; the folk and traditional media can play a crucial role in educating children in such a way that they can relate things with their day to day life. We must expose our children to folk and traditional media which will enrich their knowledge on the culture of their own community or other communities. Basic knowledge of one’s cultural background is valuable in itself. While educating our children we are trying to integrate what is learned from the school and what is experienced at home and in communities. There should be space to integrate the community culture with the school curriculum, then only the children can explore the school with greater understanding.

Cultural Shock: When children or individuals experience a cultural set up that provides an exact contrast to their already existing cultural values, they are in for a cultural shock. For example, when a student goes from a village to a metro city for education and finds the freedom that girls enjoy as compared to how they are treated in the villages, he/she is in for a cultural shock. A person is in a state of cultural shock when s/he comes across an environment where the community values, realities, perceptions, beliefs and actions are altogether different and present themselves with a different logic and sanctity as compared to the ones that he was a part of in his/her community.
Often one would wonder that in a diverse set up like that of India with many cultures which folk media should be adopted. The answer to this is that the dominant culture and folk media of the area should be adopted as the communities around would be well versed with them. Let us look at one such educational experiment where traditional media played a worthy role.

‘Kanavu’, meaning ‘dream’ was an initiative of Indian writer and activist, K.J, Baby which was started in 1994 with the aim of educating the marginal communities with the help of folk and traditional media. This alternative school for tribals is located in Nadavayal village of Wayanad district of Kerala. In order to ensure that tribal children do not lose their cultural values, the school which runs with the aid of a Bangalore based charitable trust, incorporated tribal folk forms as the media of education. The education imparted is more practical oriented and helps the children build a sense of their identity and that of their community. The children are trained in folk music and dance, farming and martial arts. An alumni of the school is Ms. Leela Snthosh, the first woman film director from a tribal background who completed her schooling from Kanavu. This school is a unique experiment of use of folk and traditional media in imparting education and making children self-reliant other than carrying out development of marginalized communities.

### 10.8 REVIVAL PROGRAMS FOR FOLK AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Indian is rich with her folk and traditional art forms which enjoy international popularity and are also potent tourist attractions. However, the existence of some of the folk and traditional media is threatened because of factors like it is not a part of urban lives, work complexity, technology and internet which is providing an alternate means of information and entertainment and a modern, busy lifestyle. In this section, we will be looking at how efforts are made to revive or preserve the folk and traditional media.

Several government initiatives have been made for this. Some of them are discussed here:

- **National Cultural Exchange Programme**: This scheme initiated by the government of India aims at supporting artistes and promotion of Indian folk and traditional media through exchange programmes. Seven regions all over India were identified and the artistes of one region were sent to another to perform their art forms. Government bears the expense of conducting the programme and providing remuneration to the artistes.

- **Guru Shishya Parampara Scheme**: This initiative of the Government is aimed at preserving those folk forms which are vanishing or have an existential crisis. The scheme is implemented through zonal cultural centres to nurture young talent in folk art forms. The great master (Guru) and the pupil (Shishya) are provided with some financial assistance as well.

- **Young Talent Artist’s Scheme Award**: Through this initiative, the government encourages young talented artists in the age group of 18-31. The applicant must be talented in certain rare folk and traditional media which are on the verge of extinction.
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Theatre Rejuvenation Scheme: this scheme was initiated to support the traditional theatre art forms. Under this scheme seminars and workshops were conducted to promote theatre art including contemporary, experimental, traditional and street theatre.

These are some of the efforts made by the central government. There are also programmes that are run by the state governments at various places. Also there are a few initiatives that are supported by non-profit organisations like:

- **Shrujan**: Shrujan is a NGO working for craftswomen in the Kutch region of Gujarat to uplift women who primarily engage in folk art. They provide a working atmosphere to the rural women and encourage them to live with their indigenous art forms while also earning a living out of it.

- **Anahad**: Anahad is a NGO working to support folk artists who require financial assistance. They identify and support artists who left the folk and traditional media due to the financial crisis and picked up other jobs to fend for themselves.

These are some efforts made by the government or NGOs to uplift our folk and traditional media.

Check Your Progress 3

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. What is Cultural Shock?

2. How does participation lead to community empowerment?

10.9 CASE STUDIES ON FOLK AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

**CASE STUDY 1**: Role of Traditional Folk Media in Rural Development: A Case Study of UrmulGaavaniyar (A traditional media group) in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan.
The sands of Thar desert are home to a rich and vibrant tradition of folk art that are based on performance, rhythms, melodies, puppets, colors and a passion of artists who have charmed the desert for thousands of years. These artists not only performed these arts, but also documented them through tales, memories and gave them a hue of the Thar way of life. This idea formed a basis for understanding the cultural heritage of the Thar society. Sudden socio-cultural changes including the new media struck these artists in the 1980’s and they were forced to take a call on ‘whether to perform’ or ‘whether to earn a livelihood’ from the earlier ‘perform and earn a livelihood’ form of art. While some of them migrated to cities to work as manual labor, the others who chose to stay slid into poverty and insecurity.

Thus in the 1990’s, the URMUL trust, a social organization in the Thar gave birth to Gaavaniyar, a forum where the folk artists could come together and explore possible solutions.

URMUL Gaavaniyar consists of singers, instrumentalists on pungi, dholak etc. and a few puppet players. ‘Gaavaniyar’ promotes rural development through folk media by performing puppet shows, songs and plays on developmental issues like education, health, migration etc. by moving from village to village, small towns to international forums where the voice of the locals is heard. Moving since then, ‘Gaaviniyar’ through some skill enhancement got ready to seek sustainable solutions to the problems of the folk artistes and help them earn a livelihood through their art. It is committed to work for the marginalized communities of folk music in Rajasthan.

Gaavaniyar, through its collaborative and diverse approaches, is expanding the platform to create a prototype of income generation through traditional forms of folk expression and eliminating middlemen. Developing greater artistic, management and production skills have made them successful so far. They work paralellly at two levels:

1) By performing at various destinations on social causes including health and education, women’s right through folk music and puppetry etc.

2) Providing services to social organizations for their campaigning

Several other initiatives like developing music albums for commercial distribution, new range of paper mache’ products have paved the way for Gaavaniyar to embark on a systematic effort to equip young talent from traditional communities and open up livelihood opportunities for them.

This forum is building consciousness and sensitivity on developmental issues through expressing their views boldly, freely, sternly and fearlessly. Thus, Gaavaniyar is working towards preserving the vibrant and cultural heritage through sustainable and innovative solutions to tackle challenges. This in return, is encouraging a large number of artists to keep their art alive and earn livelihood too.

**Case Study 2: Folk Media for Agricultural Extension – A Study of Yakshagana – A South Indian Folk Theatre**

Agricultural Extension involves the application of scientific research and innovative knowledge to agricultural practices primarily through farmer education. Thus, agricultural extension becomes an important prerequisite of
agricultural development in developing countries like India as it aims to transfer information from the global knowledge base and the local research to the farmers, educating them to make better decisions and stimulating desirable agricultural development. Several folk media including Yakshagana play a significant role in agricultural extension communication from the perspective of diffusion of innovation. Diffusion of innovation studies the process of awareness and acceptance of a new process or technique in a community up to the grass root level.

Yakshagana is a 500 year old south Indian folk theatre, popular in the coastal districts of Karnataka. Yakshagana has its base in epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita and various other puranas which are rich in noble values. Every Prasanga (episode; play text in the form of poetry) based on these mythologies have a deep impact on their audience, thereby influencing generations of natives with its morality and ethics. Yakshagana has been a channel of informal education for the masses, aptly referred to as an Open University as the locals have developed a psychological bond with the art and artists.

The history of Yakshagana influencing locals with regard to agriculture dates back to the early independence days in India. The outbreak of the second world war (1939-45) and the Great Bengal Famine of 1943 which killed millions of people due to starvation put severe strain on India’s food economy. The situation compelled the government of India to initiate the ‘Grow More Food’ campaign in 1948. Agricultural departments of all the state governments were given the responsibility of implementing this campaign. Yakshagana played a significant role in disseminating the objectives of this campaign and other schemes of agricultural development in Karnataka’s coastal regions in the 1950’s and 60’s. Competitions were also held so that Yakshagana authors could come up with new prasangas (episodes) dealing with agricultural development. Several prasangas on agricultural development were composed and performed during this period which included NelluraGella (literally means ‘victory of village of Paddy, 1958), Japani Krishni Vijaya( victory of Japanese Farming Technique,1959), Rashtra Vijaya (Victory of the Nation, 1961), Krishi Vijaya (victory of agriculture,1960) etc.

Effects of Modern Agriculture and Yakshagana

Yakshagana has not only looked at the positive side, but also looked at the other side of modernization of agriculture. The artists have responded to the contemporary developments in the field of agriculture and composed prasangam highlighting the ill effects of over-mechanization. Two prasangas in this regard were Savayava Vijaya (meaning victory of organic farming,2010) and Krishni Vijaya ( though with the same title of 1950’s and 60’s, this one highlighted the demerits of acceleration of food production and promoted the need for organic farming).

Many authors and artists have argued that Yakshagana should not be restricted to just entertainment. Any art that does not accept contemporary influences will be more dead than alive. Yakshagana has made the maximum use of its flexibility and responded to contemporary issues. All the prasangas above have a single broad intention of agricultural extension. Yakshagana is a traditional folk theatre that does not cause changes all of a sudden because it works at a deeper psychological level. But overall, Yakshagana prasanga can create a congenial environment which is an important prerequisite of agricultural extension.
**Case Study 3: Role of Folk Media in Rural Development: A Study of Combating Child Marriage in Malda**

The custom of marrying daughters early is a prevalent and widespread practice in the financially backward, illiterate poor villages of rural Bengal as in many other states of India as well. Among many other rural districts of Bengal, Malda is reported to have the highest incidences of child marriages in the state (5-6% higher than the state average). Economic necessities, ensuring male guardianship, avoiding sexual assault etc. are a few reasons among others for these early marriages. Child marriage is an absolute violation of human rights and child abuse. Thus, this case study explores a combating mechanism of this social curse in Malda through awareness using folk media of the district.

Surveys in the form of questionnaires and personal interviews were conducted in 30 villages (two in each of the 15 blocks of Malda) to understand the causative factors and formulate an awareness campaign. Folk media forms like the Gambhira and Domini were chosen as a communication tool for the awareness generation programmes which required training workshops for these artists, interactive theatre shows, meetings with adolescent girls etc.

Theatre based awareness campaign was one among many other awareness campaigns including Workshops with adolescent girls, Community meetings, Stakeholder Consultation etc. There were two components to the Theatre based awareness campaign

1) Capacity Building- wherein workshops were conducted for the local theatre groups of Gambhira and Domini for sensitizing them on the issues of child rights and child marriages and thereby guided them to develop theatre script on these themes. The Domini and Gambhira groups aimed at sensitizing the villagers on:
   - Early marriage and problems associated with it
   - Child rights and laws
   - Legal age of marriage (18 for girls and 21 for boys)
   - Severe health impact on the girl due to an early marriage
   - Skill development for girls
   - Contact details of agencies working for prevention of child marriages

2) Street Theatre Shows were held in market places, near temples, Masjids etc. Exhibitions were put up depicting the ill effects of child marriage which were followed by audience interactions where villagers would be asked questions out of the messages disseminated.

After these performances, it was observed that the villagers had high acceptance of the messages conveyed through dramas like Gambhira and Domini reflecting the high potential of these art forms to drive developmental messages to rural villagers. Also, various schools and local police stations were seen to mobilize their resources on composition of folk songs and dramas to create awareness among people.

Thus, communication is an important tool to promote cultural and social development of a Nation and the role of folk media cannot be overlooked in it. To overcome this curse of child marriage, folk media should be used to educate the illiterate, ignorant superstitious sentiments of the rural people along with focusing on interpersonal communication skills to mobilize and sensitize people to participate voluntarily and end child marriages in India.
10.10 LET US SUM UP

Folk and Traditional media are the most unique communication media that have the effectiveness that the conventional media cannot have. It is participatory in nature and so does not appear to be an intrusion in the community. Also, of late some successful educational experiments have been made with folk media. Overall, it is in a position to serve all the functions that the mainstream media do – educating, informing, making people aware and persuading the people to make the desired behavioural change.

The traditional folk media are also strategic tools of communication aiming at bringing about development in a community on issues of common interest. They are not only able modes of communication, they are also the strong symbols of a community’s culture and ethnicity which is being preserved as our heritage not only on a national level but also through international organizations like UNESCO and others.

10.11 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS


3) Folk Art, Folk Art History, Folk Art Of India, Indian Folk Art Types. (2021). Retrieved 30 March 2021, from http://www.historytuition.com/history-of-art/folk-art.html#:~:text=It%20is%20due%20to%20successful,that%20folk%20art%20became%20popular.&text=Modern%20folk%20art%20is%20younger%20than%208000%20BC.


10.12 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

1. Folk and traditional media are the oldest tools of development in societies at various levels of progress. The uniqueness of this media is that it involves people’s participation to the maximum. The folk media make use of varying combinations of performing arts like village dramwa, rural dance and folk songs which are unique to a certain community and society. This belongingness to a community gives the folk form a distinct identity of its own. Though the folk art and music of different states of India are distinct, they have some common bearing among them.

2. Refer to 10.3.2 and 10.3.3

Check Your Progress: 2

1. Refer to 10.5
2. Refer to 10.6.3

Check Your Progress: 3

1. Refer to 10.7
2. Refer to 10.6.4