

TRADITIONAL FOLK MEDIA: A POTENTIALLY EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TOOL IN RURAL AREA

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Abstract

Communication pattern of any society is a part its total culture and it can be understood in the context of its social structure, organization and institutions. The process of communication is as old as mankind. Every country has its own traditional and folk media communication, which serves as significant tools in the process of motivating the people in the desired direction. On the other hand, the modern mass media are not performing the role expected from them due to some limitations. With this background this study was conducted in Nagpur district of Maharashtra state of India. Three villages namely, Ghorad, Budhala and Kaniyadhhol were selected purposively in which traditional media shows were performed regularly and five most popular traditional media were selected viz. Tamasha, Bhajan, Kirtan, Dhandhar and Quawaly. Majority of the respondents were visitors of Tamasha (71.59 %) and Bhajan (59.94 %). Almost all preferred place was village itself (71.59 to 100 %) for viewing these programmes. The shows of Dhandhar (100 %), Tamasha (77.22 %) and Kirtan (76.44 %) were usually performed on the festivals like Diwali. Most of the viewers (61.61 per cent) were liked of Tamasha due to lively performance (40.50 %) followed by Bhajan (46.62 %) due to contents covering familiar religious themes (85.68 %). Most preferred themes by the viewers through these media were, on social development including agriculture and patriotic songs. Almost all Government officials opined that the traditional media programmes are effective and had good impact on rural masses.

Introduction

In a developing country like India, which is multi lingual and diverse in character and where peasantry constitutes the largest segment of population, knowledge of folk institution, their habits, customs, traditions and culture serve as significant tools in the process of motivating the rural masses towards development programmes launched by the government at the national, state and local levels. Several authors (Krishnan, 1965; Desai, 1969; Parmar, 1973; Zaidi, 1975 and Sanzgri, 1977) have stated that the traditional media are very effective tools in rural communication process. Folk media provide important tool in the process of motivating rural masses towards accepting social changes that are being introduced through various development agencies. Folklore in its history has been connected with national issues. The popularity of these media is due to have some inherent characteristics are as:

- Folk songs are familiar to audiences and have positive feeling about what they hear. Audience can provide instant feedback to the performer unlike other media. An integral

part of folk media is audience participation. They are thoroughly enjoyed and approved by all age groups.

- The folk art forms satisfy our innate need for self-expression, for more instruction, combined with entertainment and for the dramatic and the lyrical. The traditional media preserve and disseminate in a lively manner, the tradition and culture of our forefathers (Sarireha, 1995).
- Traditional media are more effective in rural areas because the techniques are simple and easy. This is so because they reflect the cultural ethos and are closer to the hearts of the common man in rural areas (Saxsena, 1993).
- Folk arts have continued to play a meaningful role in rural areas, in educating the rural people about the consequences of social evils like alcoholism, illiteracy untouchability, superstition, communalism, population explosion, malnutrition and insanitation, dowry and so on. Even today in the midst of hi-tech media scenario the traditional performing arts continue to be popular (Murthy, 1994).

Folk media help in making the task of nation building and socio-economic development easier and acceptable to rural masses (Apte, 1978).

Purpose of the study

Modern mass media are flourishing now-a-days but these are not performing expected role from them due to the several reasons like, more illiteracy percentage, lack of electricity, high technicality & costly equipments and lack of transporting facilities (Pahad Anjali, 2000). The traditional media have remarkable impact on the rural society because of their acceptable idioms, functional significance and entertainment component (Intodia and Uppadhyay, 1991). In developing countries a systematic and scientific analysis of folk media helps in providing a clue to the working of people's minds and their practices. Such knowledge serves as an important tool to policy makers and planners to evolve policies for motivating the people in the desired direction and induce social progress as a self-developing process in the rural areas. Yet these are so important, unfortunately these are not using frequently in extension teaching and development communication methods. It was made essential to conduct this study with following objectives.

Objectives

- To study the nature, theme and extent of use of traditional folk media.
- To find out the interest and opinion of viewers of traditional folk media.

Relevant terms and definitions

The term indigenous is often interchangeably used with terms like traditional or local while indigenous communication system, which existed before the arrival of mass media are referred to as traditional or local. The terms related to traditional media are operationally define as follows.

Folk: All those persons residing within a given area who are conscious of common culture, heritage, have some constant traits, whose way of life is more simple, natural, less systematic and specialized in modern sense.

Traditional media: Traditional media are indigenous channels of communication having in built character of entertainment, which were made for expressing socio-ritual, moral and emotional need of the folk such as folk songs, folk arts, folklore, etc. They have no grammar or literature

yet they are nurtured through oral traditions. They are alive, receptive to new ideas including changes over the time and generations and colorful forms of presentation. The familiar format and content expressed in colloquial dialects creates a successful communication situation in which, there is constant sharing and two way flow of communication and involves every body in the communication process. These attributes of the media keep spellbound and compelled to join the audience.

Folk song: A folk song is a lyrical short, simple, less artistic and rhythmic song of community. It has capacity of free addition, subtraction and modification and no originator. It originated, transmitted and perpetuated spontaneously through oral traditions while persons express their emotions as to get relax from fatigue or to express happiness in festival gathering for entertainment.

Tamasha: At the time of religious functions and rural festivals like Diwali, Holi (the main festivals of India), etc., Tamasha is most preferred by the village people. Tamasha is often started with Gan-gavalan, lavani, and or Vagnatya (parts of the Tamasha). It consists of eight to ten different performers. Two of them are main singers, one or two dancers, one dholki (drum) player, one joker and rest all are chorus associates. Woman's role and dancer's role is usually performed by male only. It is fast music accompanied by different themes such as social, patriotic, film based, riddle and cynical. It normally starts with little drama item followed by dance and song (Gan-gavalan). It is lively, interesting and has inbuilt quality of flexibility.

Bhajan: The literal meaning of Bhajan is a religious song. This folk art is generally performed on religious functions especially during Diwali season. It consists of six or seven performers. One of them is the main singer and all rest are his associates. Besides religious themes, they also have social themes. Singer can easily modify them according to his need. Musical instruments like dholki (drum), manjira (metal bells), harmonium, tambora (voilin) and tabala (kind of drum) are used as accompaniment to make it more interesting. The Bhajan programmes are normally held at night. The preferred occasions for holding Bhajans are childbirth, after death, navaratri (festival period) and Ganesh utasav (festival period).

Kirtan: It is one of the oldest of Indian mass media and in the ancient sages Narad is believed to be its founder and foremost exponent. It is traditional form in which there is continuous flow of discourse of religious nature. It is now and then interspersed with prayers or Bhajan chanting in unison with the entire crowd of the listeners along with the performer and in an atmosphere of abundant ecstasy. This is one main singer cum narrator who is supported by 6-7 players of musical instruments such as harmonium, tabla, tambora and manjira. Main singer has also wooden structure with metal bells. The performer begins his sermon by singing the text of a suitable theme song and goes on elucidating its purpose with pertinent explanation and comments making his own critical observations and providing ample choice quotations from literature and scriptures. This brings the first part of his sermon to a close, as he reverts again to the theme song from where he originally started.

Dhandhar: The literal meaning of dhandhar is a big confused group. These folk arts programmes generally start around Diwali seasons. This form is a combination of story telling and songs. It is also known as ballad (a folk art of Maharashtra), which includes some kind of

acting, dance and drama along with rhythm of musical instruments. Five to six performers are doing acting along with singing. It also includes a joker (Songadya) and a director (Sutradhar). Theme of songs included in dhandhar are appreciation songs of great personalities as well as criticism on bad happenings.

Quawwali: This folk art is favourite of the Muslim community. It is performed at the time of their social or religious functions (Urs). The theme of the songs are related to social situation or prayers of their God. The main attraction in this art is that there is one leading male singer and one leading female singer opposite him. There are two groups of performers consisting of 5 to 6 different artists like harmonium player, Dholki player, banjo player, churmura (local musical instrument) player and tabala player. There is normally questions-answers session in their singing.

Methodology

Locale of the study

In this kind of study, the researcher's familiarity with local language, culture, beliefs and attitude of the people is a must. Therefore, Nagpur district of Maharashtra state of India was purposively selected as the researcher is well acquainted with the local language, area, its culture and traditions.

Sampling plan

Selection of villages

Three villages were purposively selected based on following criterion:

- i) Villages were at least 15-20 kms. away from the city so that traditional media were not contaminated and were authentic
- ii) Sufficient traditional media shows performed in the year previous to the investigation, and
- iii) Traditional media such as *Tamasha*, *Bhajan*, *Kirtan*, *Dhandhar* and *Quawwali* were performed regularly. It was also made sure through the pilot study that they were popular among people of this area. Finally, three villages viz., *Ghorad*, *Budhala* and *Kaniyadhol* were purposively selected for the study.

Selection of respondent

Respondents were selected arbitrarily (lottery method) from all social strata of the villages to avoid biasness i.e. random sampling method; a total of sixty respondents each from the selected villages were finalized. All 180 respondents were found to be regular viewers of the traditional media viz., *Tamasha*, *Bhajan*, *Kirtan*, *Dhandhar* and *Quawwali*. However, some departments of Government using traditional media for social development work viz., *Darubandi Prasar Mahiti Kendra* (publicity of anti-alcoholism, Center), Nagpur, District Health Office, Nagpur, District *Saksharata Abhiyan Samiti* (literacy mission), Nagpur, *Taluka Saksharata Abhiyan Samiti*, Kalmeshwar and Nagpur *Doordarshan Kendra* (television center), Nagpur, were therefore, included in the sample.

Semi-structured interview schedule

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, results of the pilot study, experts' guidance and general observations, two separate semi-structured participatory interview schedules were

prepared to collect information from the viewers pertaining to communication, situational characteristics and perception of the respondents covered various dimensions of the folk media and its role in the area and the concerned Government officials.

The schedules were pre-tested in one village with 20 viewer- respondents. This was not included in the sample. Elimination of unwanted, superfluous questions and substitution of required ones were done after pre-testing and the schedules were finalised and translated in local language *Marathi* (the language of people of Maharashtra).

Sources of Information

Data were collected with the help of semi-structured interview schedules by conducting face-to-face personal as well as group interviews with all the respondents. The investigator also recorded his own observations.

Statistical method

The collected data were analyzed by using simple statistical tools frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Findings

Perception of the viewers about different aspects and nature of the traditional media

The viewer ship pattern of the viewers was ascertained regarding *Tamasha*, *Bhajan*, *Kirtan*, Drama and *Dhandhar* as influenced by place, occasion, organizer and theme. Results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of viewers according to visit to the traditional media programmes during last two years (N=180)*

	<i>Tamasha</i>	<i>Bhajan</i>	<i>Kirtan</i>	<i>Quawally</i>	<i>Dhandhar</i>
I. Visitors	129 (71.59)	108 (59.94)	54 (29.97)	15 (8.33)	30 (16.65)
• Place of viewing					
Village	129 (71.59)	96 (97.95)	54 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	30 (100.00)
Tehsil	51 (28.31)	6 (5.88)	-	-	-
• Occasion					
Diwali	99 (77.22)	69 (69.69)	39 (76.44)	6 (40.02)	30 (100.00)
<i>Ganesh Utsav</i>	9 (7.02)	9 (9.09)	6 (11.77)	-	-
<i>Makar Sakranti</i>	15 (11.70)	-	-	9 (60.00)	-
<i>Navaratra</i>	6 (4.68)	21 (21.21)	6 (11.77)	-	-
• Organizers					
Interested people (above 30 years)	117 (66.69)	99 (100.00)	51 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	30 (100.00)
Youngsters	57	-	-	-	-

(up to 30 years)	(32.81)	-	-	-	-
• Themes					
Social	15 (11.8)	3 (2.15)	-	12 (80.00)	3 (11.11)
Patriotic	-	-	-	-	-
Religious	-	105 (97.65)	51 (89.76)	-	-
Recreational and entertainment	114 (88.92)	-	6 (10.53)	3 (20.00)	24 (88.89)
(% indicates in parentheses)			*Multiple responses		

On perusal of table 1, it is seen that a large number of respondents were visitors of *Tamasha* (71.59 %) and *Bhajan* (59.94 %) respectively. Comparatively lower number were visitors of *Kirtan* (29.97 %), *Dhandhar* (16.65 %) and *Quawally* (8.33 %). It was observed that more programmes of *Tamasha* and *Bhajan* were organizing which led to their popularity.

Preferred place of viewing of traditional media was village itself (71.59 to 100 %). A little over one fourth viewers (28.31 %) went to see *Tamasha* at *Tehsil* (block) level when some eminent group performed. Therefore, such shows should be organized in the village itself to have maximum participation and impact.

Table 1, also reveals that most of the shows of *Dhandhar* (100 %), *Tamasha* (77.22 %) and *Kirtan* (76.44 %) were performed on *Diwali* occasion. Same was true for *Bhajan* (69.69 %) and *Quawally* (40.02 %). *Bhajans* were organizing during *Navratras* as mentioned by about one fifth (21.21 %) respondents. During that time people are in spiritual mood and like to have such gatherings. Relatively less traditional media shows were organised at the time of *Ganesh mahostav* (7.0 to 11.77 %). *Quawally* was the highlight of *Makar sankranti* (a festival of India) celebrations as told by 60 per cent respondents.

The organizers was a group of enthusiastic persons of the village who were taking initiative to plan and execution of the such programme activities step-wise as mentioned in Table 4 for completions of the programme systematically and successfully. Cent percent respondents informed that *Bhajan*, *Kirtan*, *Quawally* and *Dhandhar* were organized by the interested people in the traditional media shows of the village.

Majority of the viewers perceived coverage of recreational and entertainment themes in *Tamasha* (88.92 %) followed by *Dhandhar* (88.89 %). Religious themes existed in *Bhajan* (97.65 %) and *Kirtan* (89.76 %). Popularity of *Tamasha* is reflected as entertainment media in rural area, which has lot of potential if wisely utilized as entertainment cum information media.

Most liked traditional media

The viewers were asked about most liked traditional media and its reasons. These are listed and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of viewers according to most liked traditional media and its reasons

	Most liked traditional media	Frequency (N=180)	Percentage
I.	<i>Tamasha</i>	111	61.61
	Reasons :		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lively performance	45	40.50
<input type="checkbox"/>	Story or content based on current topics	33	22.70
<input type="checkbox"/>	Colourful style of presentation	12	10.80
<input type="checkbox"/>	Melodious voice of the singer	6	5.40
<input type="checkbox"/>	Well synchronization of voice of the singers and rhythm of instruments	6	5.40
<input type="checkbox"/>	Good dance steps	6	5.40
<input type="checkbox"/>	Compatible with audience culture	3	2.70
II.	<i>Bhajan</i>	84	46.62
	Reasons :		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contents covering familiar religious themes	72	85.68
<input type="checkbox"/>	Melodious voice of the singer	9	10.71
<input type="checkbox"/>	Compatible with audience's culture	3	3.57
III.	<i>Kirtan</i>	48	26.64
	Reasons :		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contents covering familiar religious themes	21	43.68
<input type="checkbox"/>	Story or content based on current topic	15	31.25
<input type="checkbox"/>	Compatible with audience's culture	9	18.72
<input type="checkbox"/>	Colourful style of presentation	3	6.24
IV.	<i>Dhandhar</i>	12	6.67
	Reasons :		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lively performances	3	25.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Well synchronization of voice of the singers and rhythm of instruments	3	25.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	No vulgarity in the contents/performance	3	25.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	Content related with religious theme	3	25.00
V.	<i>Quawwalli</i>	11	6.11
	Reasons :		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Melodious voice of singer	8	72.73
<input type="checkbox"/>	Colourful style of presentation	3	27.27

It shows that most of the viewers (61.61 per cent) were in favour of *Tamasha*. It was easily the most liked traditional media. Out of 111 viewers who placed *Tamasha* at first rank, the most mentioned reasons for it were: due to lively performance (40.50 per cent) followed by story or contents based on current topic (22.70 per cent). It is concluded that *Tamasha* was most liked due to lively performance and its story based on the current topic. This finding needs to be given special attention. Artists doing *Tamasha* shows needs to be given full support interms of training, financial assistance and appreciation in the form of awards. They can be trained in social development themes such as agricultural development to reach each and every farmer of Maharashtra.

According to some viewers (46.62 per cent), *Bhajan* was their all time favourite and most liked traditional media. Reasons given by them were; contents covering familiar religious themes (85.68 per cent) and melodious voice of the singer (10.71 per cent). The results show deep religious inclination of a large number of rural viewers. Care should be taken that their religious sentiments are respected while planning traditional media for agricultural development. Nothing controversial or hurting should make the contents of such gatherings.

Nearly one-fourth (26.64 per cent) viewers felt that *Kirtan* was their most liked traditional media. Reasons given by them were, content covering familiar religious themes (43.68 per cent) and story or content based on current topic (31.25 per cent). Extension programmes especially for women are normally started with *Kirtan*. It attracts lot of women to come for gatherings. Same strategy can be used for male farmers based on this result.

A few viewers (6.67 per cent) felt that *Dhandhar* was their most liked traditional media. Reasons given by viewers were lively performances, synchronization of voice of the singer, rhythm of instrument and no vulgarity in the content, which are related with religious themes (25 per cent for each reason). It was, however, found that there were very few viewers of *Dhandhar*. Lack of availability of such programmes in this area could be the reason for its less popularity.

A small number (6.11 per cent) of viewers considered *Quawwalli* as their most liked traditional media. Reasons mentioned by them were, melodious voice (voice of singer which audience feel sweet and pleasant to hear) of singer (72.73 per cent) and colourful style of presentation (27.27 per cent). *Quawwali* was not a traditional media close to their heart and may not serve much purpose in developmental messages.

Preference for the themes of traditional media

The viewers were asked about their preference of themes of traditional media. The list of these themes in order of their preference is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of viewers according to their preference for the themes of traditional media (N=180)

Themes of traditional media	Preference of the viewers				Total score
	I	II	III	IV&above	
Social development	87	30	33	18	522
	(48.28)	(16.65)	(18.31)	(9.99)	
Patriotic	60	60	36	9	501
	(33.30)	(33.30)	(19.98)	(4.99)	
Recreational & entertainment	21	48	42	51	363
	(11.66)	(26.64)	(23.31)	(28.30)	
Political	3	6	21	84	177
	(16.65)	(3.33)	(1.66)	(46.62)	
History of freedom fighters	3	12	27	69	171
	(16.65)	(6.66)	(14.99)	(38.29)	
Religious	12	18	9	51	171
	(6.66)	(9.99)	(4.99)	(28.30)	
Ritual & ceremonial	0	6	6	42	72
	-	(3.33)	(3.33)	(23.31)	

(% indicates in parentheses)

Overall first preference was given by viewers to social development themes including agriculture (522 total score) and second to patriotic songs (501 total score). The patriotic songs are related to the persons who had sacrificed and devoted of his/her life for protection and development of his/her country. The third preference was for recreation and entertainment (363 total score). The fourth highest overall score for theme preference went to political (overall score 177) followed closely and equally by history of freedom fighters and religious (overall score 171 each).

Steps followed in organizing traditional media show

The viewers were asked about the sequence of steps undertaken in organizing the traditional media show by the organizers. On the basis of their response, average score was worked out and arranged in ascending order. It is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Sequence of steps followed in organizing traditional media shows as per viewers (N=180).

S. No.	Steps of the traditional media	Average Score	Step Number
1	Money Collection	1.67	I
2	Selection of site	2.07	II
3	Publicity	3.12	III
4	Approach of folk artists	4.32	IV
5	Stage preparation	5.07	V
6	Seating arrangement	3.17	VI

The sequence of the steps in organizing the traditional media show by the organizers started with Money collection (1.67 average score) followed by selection of site (2.07 average score), and publicity of the programme (3.12 average score). After completing the first three steps, artists were approached by the organizers (4.32 average score) and preparations were made for making a stage (5.07 average score) followed by seating arrangement for the audience (6.17 average score). It confirms that in organizing any traditional media show in the rural area the above step wise sequence had to be followed. Results indicate that organizing a traditional media show in the village itself is not simple and requires minimum of six steps as indicated.

Viewers' purpose served by the traditional media show

The viewers were asked about their satisfaction and purpose expected to serve from traditional media shows. The list of these purpose served is presented in Table 3.

Table 5. Perception of viewers about the purpose served by the traditional media show (N=180)*

Purpose served by the show	Fequency	Percentage
Good impact of message realized	129	71.60
Entertainment	93	54.95
Develop "we" feeling	66	36.63

Sense of urge fulfillment	15	8.33
Meeting with like minded people	12	6.67
Relaxation	6	3.33

* *Multiple responses*

From the Table 5, it is noted that the viewers' perception about the purpose served by show were good impact of message realized (71.60 per cent), felt entertained (54.95 per cent), developed 'we' feeling (36.63 per cent), sense of urge fulfillment (8.33 per cent), meeting with like minded people (6.67 per cent) and feeling relaxed (3.33 per cent). This can be interpreted that traditional media shows are still total involvement shows providing entertainment and education.

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

Almost all Government officials opined that the traditional media programmes are effective and had good impact on rural masses compare to the others media. It is successful mainly because the artists could get direct feedback due to performances being live and in local language that also help develop closeness. According to the officials blending of the traditional media with mass media would be more effective in rural areas as people in villages can identify themselves better with the traditional folk forms.

Conclusion

From the results it is clear that if we want to use traditional media as a communication tool, it is essential to consider some points viz., selection of the folk media on the basis of popularity with concerned folk artists who were well acquainted with local language, dialects, culture and traditions, organize at village place with the help of interested village people systematically with following all the steps and theme related to social development, patriotic as well as recreational and entertainment suitable to the media should be included. Thus, utilization of locally available resources viz. talent of the folk artists, popularity of the media, agriproverbs, acceptable idioms, riddles, etc., through traditional media found very interesting and effective as communication tool for rural development and natural recourse technology. It is therefore, concluded that the potential of the traditional media can be utilized wisely and systematically for agricultural as well as rural development too. They can serve the society as indigenous tool of iner-personal, inter-group and inter-village communication for ages. This conclusion also in congruence with Dinampo (1991), Saxsena (1993), Obinne (1997) and Dale and Haboan (1963).

Implications

Combination of various traditional media with extension teaching aids can be used and studied for determination of effectiveness for extension education purpose and rural mass communication for development. In depth study may also be carried out to find out message carrying capacity, homophily, communicability, fidelity, empathy, credibility of the traditional media and blending with modern mass media.

Educational Importance

Combination of various traditional media with extension teaching aids can be use for effective transfer of technology, extension education purpose as well as human resource development

through blending the traditional media with electronic media. The entertainment and recreational aspects of traditional media can be used to find out how these aspects enhance learning, retention of knowledge and diffusion. Besides, the information carrying capacity of these channels can be tested for their effective use. These arts have continued to play a meaningful role in rural area in conducting the rural people about the consequences of social evils like, alcoholism, illiteracy, superstitions, communalization, population explosion, malnutrition, dowry, insanitation and so on. These media can also be utilized for the same purpose.

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