

Artistic Exploration in Scientific Research And Technology
Dr. Bitasta Das
Department of UG Humanities
Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru

Lecture – 19
Folk Art a Potent Medium of Communication

Hello friends. In the last class we have seen certain examples around the world where artist have incorporated science and technology in the artwork and what results they have been produced. We have seen magnificent installation, we have magnificent pieces of art, we have seen multimedia art work which has incorporated science and technology. As I have told you before that this course is about we have basically focusing upon Indian folk art.

So, let us see what potential Indian folk art has got and whether it is able to communicate messages in an effective manner. So, today we will focus on the effectiveness of Indian folk art and if it has the vocabulary, if it has the potential to express complex things like science and technology. So, Folk Art Potent Medium of Communications. So, let us see if what has folk art the role folk art has played in the process of communication.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:29)

The use of folk media for communication is not new. Since the 1950s folk media has served as a complementary source of communication alongside "mainstream media". This media has been used to transfer knowledge and information in order to educate, spread awareness, persuade and entertain. For communication, throughout the world, traditional media has been evoked. For example, for women and child safety and health and hygiene, importance of education, educate the farmers regarding better crop yields, curb social evils like child marriage, dowry and alcoholism, inform about deadly diseases like cancer, HIV-AIDS etc.

Folk art forms originate from local cultural norms, belief and traditions. The content can hence be couched in culturally appropriate ways. Here lies the success of folk art forms as tools of communication.

The use of folk media for communication is not new. Since the 1950s folk media has served as a complimentary source of communication alongside mainstream media. So,

mainstream media would be newspaper, television, radio also films are sometimes considered as mainstream media and since 1950 onwards right after the independence folk media has also served as a parallel along with mainstream media to communicate messages.

This media has been used to transfer knowledge and information in order to educate, spread awareness, persuade and entertain. For communication throughout the world traditional media has been evoked. For example, for women and child safety and health and hygiene, importance of education, educate the farmers regarding better crop yields, curb social evils like child marriage, dowry, and alcoholism, inform about deadly diseases like cancer, HIV-AIDS etcetera.

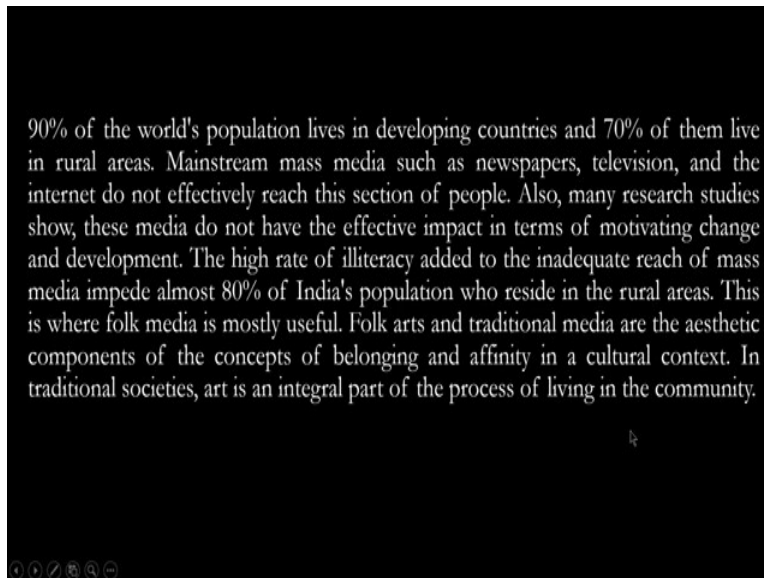
So, folk art or the folk media has been traditionally used has been to explain convey messages of social importance, to convey messages regarding social events or to aware make the people aware about certain things that the government or the deciding agencies would like the people to be aware about like initially it was used to talk to the rural masses about the importance of education regarding the importance of not giving dowry or stopping child marriage.

So, these are the certain messages that were spread among the people using traditional medium. Folk art forms originate from local cultural norms belief and tradition. The content can hence be can couched in culturally appropriate ways. Here lies a success of folk art form as a tool of communication.

So, as we have seen in the previous classes that folk art form are not a top down, but they come from the community themselves they the folk art forms are of were in the essence the cultural norms of the community they believe their traditions and the themes can can vary depending upon the situation or the setting.

So, here lies the effectiveness of a folk art that because it is so close to the community, because it is so close to the belief system that it can convey a message effectively, it can be accepted more easily.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:05)



90 percent of the world's population lives in developing countries and 70 percent of them live in rural areas. Mainstream mass media such as newspaper, television and the internet do not effectively reach the section of people. So, we have a large section of people even in today's India which are not touched by newspapers, television and or internet.

But what are the other means of communication the folk art could be one, folk media could be one. Also, many research studies showed this media do not have the effective impact in terms of motivating change and development. So, even if they reach they do not have the required or the desired impact on the people because they do not see, they do not relate their day to day matters with this kind of media they do not relate their life with television or they do not relate the life with internet.

So, the effectiveness is less. The high rate of illiteracy added to the inadequate reach of mass media impedes almost 80 percent of India's population who reside in the rural areas. This is where folk media is mostly useful. So, this is where folk media is mostly useful where there is a large scale illiteracy, where there is large scale on awareness folk media can come handy in this kind of situation. Folk art and traditional media are the aesthetic components of the concepts of belonging an affinity in a cultural context. In traditional societies, art is an integral part of process of living in the community.

So, here folk art can be useful where communities readily accept art form because they are there because they are they are born from the community themselves. So, the message that is conveyed by this traditional media are easily accepted by the people.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:01)



Characteristics of traditional folk media: They have sustained the onslaught of time as we have discussed earlier that folk art, folk media they have been around for a long period of time they are called timeless.

Because nobody knows when it began it has been also always there in the cultural matrix. They have sustained by changing with the changing times. So, they we should we should not assume that folk art is something that is of the past, but folk art often goes to change, they are dynamic they goes go through change depending upon the changing time.

Any person is always a participant in the performance, never an audience. So, we have discussed that there are no formal trained experts in the field of folk art, everyone learns through observation, everyone learns through looking at others. So, everyone participates.

So, everybody feels is sense of ownership in the folk art medium. So, nobody is an audience everyone participate this is one of the very important characteristics that everyone feels the ownership of the art. It is spontaneous as we have discussed it is not

trained in schools; it is not learnt formally, it does not have a code, but it is very spontaneous. It is flexible it is not it does not have a codified language, but it is flexible depending upon the the way a community would like to use it. It is cost effective and therefore, has enhanced repeatability.

So, it is always cost effective you will hardly come across any folk art or folk media that is very costly you will hardly see they are hardly seen wing sold in a high cost in a traditional set up. Now of course, where when you go to buy folk art from the market it will be highly prize, but actually it is always done for the people by the people it is done for their personal use or for the use of a certain amount of close people.

So, they are highly cost effective. It has immediate feedback and increase and attentiveness. So, it has a because it is for produced for a small number of peoples small number within the community itself. So, it has immediate feedback and increase attentiveness it is not commercially produced, it is not produced in a large scale. So, every artwork or every painting or a every performance will have a lot of attentiveness because it is not produced in a large scale for large number of people, but by a small number of people for a definite number of other people consumption.

It is performed in a local language promoting intelligibility. So, it is not done in foreign language with people do not relate to it is done it is always has a local vocabulary. So, if you us it is true for every folk art if you see a folk painting, you will always see the motives or you will always see the symbols that the community can relate to, you will see a flower motive that is found around them or you will see animal motive that is found around them.

So, it is always they people can always relate to it and they do not find it foreign and also there when there is performance, their performance is always done in the local language; the language that people speak around. So, there is always a sense of belongingness, a sense of ownership in folk art.

It is direct and personal. So, there is no in between medium there is always it is produced for one set of people for another set of people and it is always direct there is no there is no medium within it. So, it is a very personal from one person to other. So, it is the connection is very direct. So, these are the few characteristics this list is again not exhaustive, but few characteristics of the traditional folk media.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:25)

The communication potential of Indian traditional performing arts has been proven time and again throughout history: Alha, the popular ballad of Uttar Pradesh, and its counterparts like Laavani of Maharashtra, Gee-gee of Karnataka, Villupaattu of Tamil Nadu, and Kabigan of Bengal, were effective in arousing the conscience of the people against the colonial rule of the British; traditional media became effective in the many political and social campaigns launched by Mahatma Gandhi; and, after independence, the Union government continued to utilise these traditional performing arts to convey messages and generate awareness of development programmes in the rural areas.

The communication now let us discuss a bit about Indian folk media.

The communication potential of Indian traditional performing art has been proven time and again throughout the history. So, we must bear in mind that folk media is has been always been used in history to communicate things and mostly the theatre component of media has been used to convey things. Alha, the popular ballad of Uttar Pradesh and its counterparts like Laavani of Maharashtra, Gee-gee of Karnataka, Villupaattu of Tamil Nadu and Kabigan of Bengal, were effective in arousing the conscience of the people against colonial rule of British.

So, during the British colonial times when the Indians were struggling for independence the this folk medium came in handy they were performed to arouse emotions to arouse nationalism among the people and to have a sense of distance from the British and how we should attend independence from the British.

So, this kind of emotions were invoked by using folk media. Traditional media became effective in the many political and social campaign launched by Mahatma Gandhi and after independence the Union government continued to utilize this traditional folk art to convey messages and generate awareness of development programs in the rural areas. So, Mahatma Gandhi was a big proponent of folk medium he is said he of was of the view that folk media can directly reach the people.

So, this should be made use of and should be used to propagate messages, to propagate message of nationalism and . So, at that time using various folk media techniques people were made conscious, people were made aware about the need to have a opinion against the British colonial rule. So, even after independence, the union government has use this techniques to spread or to disseminate many ideas that it wonder to disseminate for the newly forming nation.

So, when the nation was forming folk medium came very handy because they wanted to generate the idea of nationalism about a new nation. So, folk media was excessively used during that time also.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:59)

In the 1940's, Indian People Theatre Association (IPTA), used some of the popular regional theatre forms like "Jatra" of Bengal, "Bhavai" of Gujrat, "Tamasha" of Maharashtra and "Burkatha" of Andhra Pradesh to increase social awareness and political education. In 1977, a voluntary non-governmental organization in Kerala called Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP) organized Science Jatha, a Science Procession in to spread the message of people's involvement in the development process. From 1980, the Jathas began to use different folk art forms for conveying the themes which were mainly on education, health, environment and social inequality. The repertoire consisted of songs, street dramas and other several forms of folk arts. Soon the Jathas began to be known as Kala Jathas and they became so popular that they began to be used extensively not only in Kerala but in some other parts of India also where the local organizations and people have received inspiration from KSSP and have started delivering messages through folk arts.

Well-known Theatre personality Ravi Varma of Vikas Lok Manch has been creatively interpreting social realities by interweaving them into the fabric of folk dances, choral singing etc. with the help of slum children. He deals with issues like alcoholism, pollution, religion, inequalities of caste and class, communalism and so forth. One of the group's most famous street plays is Hame Jawab Chahiya (1985) on the Bhopal gas tragedy. The play reminds the audience who are mostly children that the Bhopal incident is not a dead issue and that its aftermath still haunts the lives of many. Folk songs have played a very important in the Chipko and Apiko movements. Folk Singers of the region composed songs in folk tunes and sang them in the street folk arts. The rural children picked them up immediately and sang them all the time. Thus, they played the role of communicators. In a similar instance, environmentalists used folk arts in South India in the Save the Western Ghats (1985) campaign which was headed by Seva Sangh and supported by a number of other activist groups. Rajasthan Adult Education Association (RAEA) had conducted an experiment in a village Devakishanapura where they sponsored Ravi Chaturvedi, an alumnus of National School of Drama for formulating development messages through the use of theatre based on stories from the epics. He identified three main issues - Untouchability, Health hazards and Internal feuds which was rampant in the village. He selected some episodes from the epic Ramayana which had dramatic elements and action and reinterpreted them in the context of the problems prevailing in the village. He enacted it with the help of the village youth with great success.

In the 1940s, Indian People Theatre Association used some of the popular regional theatre forms like Jaatra of Bengal, Bhavai of Gujarat, Tamasha of Maharashtra and Burkatha of Andhra Pradesh to increase social awareness and political education.

In 1977, a voluntary non government organization in Kerala called Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishad organized Science Jatha, a science procession in to spread the message of people's involvement in the development process. From 1980s, the Jatha began to use different folk art form for conveying the themes which were mainly on education, health, environment, and social inequality. The repertoire consisted of songs, street dramas and other several forms of folk art.

So, one should bear in mind that when we talk about folk media we immediately think about theatre of performances, but folk media also incorporates paintings and other of folk art forms also which are used to convey messages.

Soon the Jatha began to be known as Kala Jathas and they became so popular that they began to be used extensively not only in Kerala, but in some other parts of India also where the local organization and people have received inspiration from KSSP and have started delivering messages through folk art. So, Kerala was one of the state which had which was pioneer in using folk art for spreading messages and other states later on got inspired by them and they too started using their local art forms to spread messages socially valued messages.

Well known theatre personality Ravi Varma of Vikas Lok Manch has been creatively interpreting social realities by interviewing them into the fabric of folk dance, choral singing etcetera with the help of slum children. He deals with issues like alcoholism, pollution, religion, inequalities of caste and class, communalism and so forth.

One of the group's most famous streets plays Hame Jawab Chahiye on the Bhopal gas tragedy. The play remind reminds the audience who are mostly children that the Bhopal incident is not a dead issue and that it is after mach still haunts the lives of many. Folk songs have played a very important role in the Chipko and Apiko movements.

Folk singers of region composed songs in folk tunes and sang them in the streets. The rural children picked them up immediately and sang them all the time. Thus, they played the role of communicators. In a similar instance, environmentalist used folk art in South India in the Save the Western Ghats campaign which was headed by Seva Sangh and supported by a number of other activist groups.

Rajasthan Adult Education Association has conducted an experiment in a village Devakishanapura where they sponsored Ravi Chaturvedi, an alumnus of National School of Drama for formulating development messages through the use of theatre based on stories from the epics. He identified three main uses, untouchability, health hazards and internal feuds which was rampant in the village. He selected some episodes from the epic Ramayana which had dramatic elements and action and interpret reinterpreted them in the context of the problem prevailing in the village.

He enacted it with the help of the village youth and with great success. So, there have been time and again there have been people who has tried to use the folk art medium to you now spread messages of social relevance. So, we have seen examples from Rajasthan, we have seen examples from Bhopal, we have seen examples from Kerala,. So, in history there have been a lot of instances artist have tried to generate social consciousness or to generate social value by using the folk art medium.

Why they used folk art medium? Is because we have discussed before that people very readily accept them may be readily accept this means of the community getting communicating message that because they are this medium are their own they can easily related relate themselves to this folk medium.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:31)



LET US KNOW

Difference between Folk Media and Electronic Media

Component	Folk media	Electronic media
Investment (Finance)	Negligible	Very high
Power	Not Essential	Essential
Receiver sets	Not required	Essential
Maintenance	None	Essential
Technical problems	None	Often
Interpreter	Not Essential	Preferable
Familiarity	Familiar	Familiar
Personal contact	Always	None
Language problems	None	Possible
Credibility factor	Very high	Lower
Audience participation	Very high	Seldom
Flexibility	Very high	Very high
Adult education	More effective	Less so
Repeatability	Easy	Difficult
Reactions	Can be gauged on the spot	Cannot be
Reach	Verywide	Restricted
Alertiveness	On the theme	Can be clouded by novelty
Intelligibility	Very high	Not comparable
Understanding	Universal	Isolated
Acceptance	Universal	Universal
Overall effectiveness	Very high	Not comparable
Programme designing	Easier	More difficult

(Source: Folk Arts as Mass Communication Media – GS Drekamer)

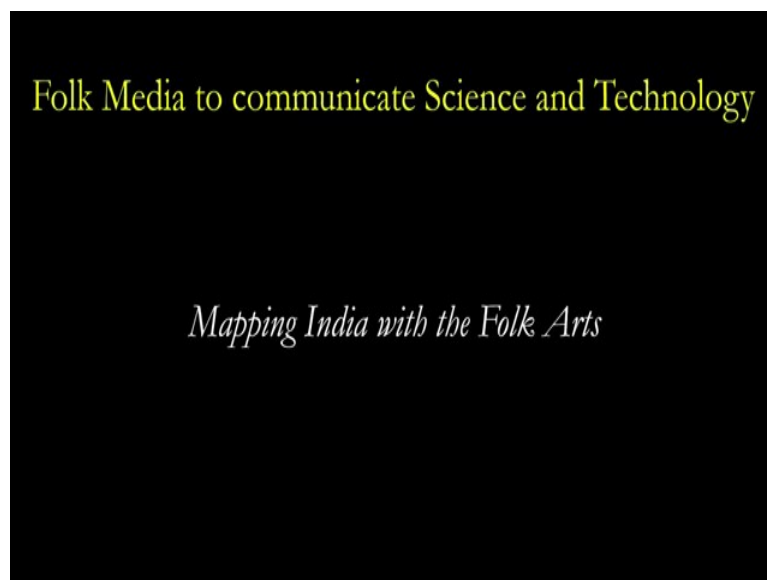
So, where does folk medium appear to be more effective than mainstream medium? Here is a list of shows there are certain features of folk medium that makes it more effective than mainstream medium let us discuss them.

So, investment as we have discussed folk medium has negligible it is very low cost. So, there is investment is very low. Electronic medium or when we are saying electronic medium also talking about other mainstream medium like it might be print medium also. So, we just we are just making a differentiation between folk medium and the mainstream medium.

So, investment in folk media is negligible whereas in the mainstream media is quite high. Power it is not essential, but in mainstream media is quite essential power of the people of the people who hold the power plays a quiet a important role in mainstream media. Receiver set not required, electronic media it is required, maintenance not in folk media not required in electronic media it is required technical.

So, these are some of the points by which folk media is more effective than electronic media or the mainstream media. So, it is cost effective, it is more accepted by the people, it is more it bears more emotional attachment people be a more emotional attachment to the folk media rather than the mainstream media which would include print and the electronic media.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:19)

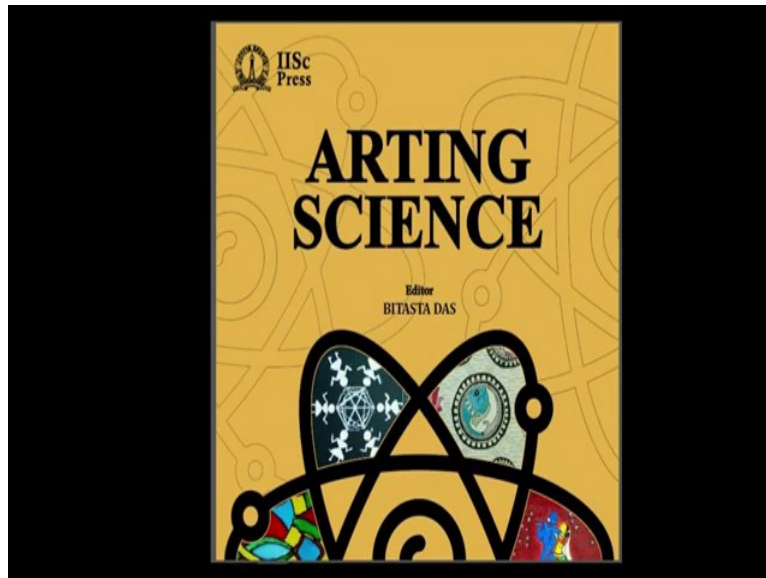


So, here I would like to mention how folk media to communicate science and technology it is it is being used in a course in Indian Institute of Science, mapping India with the folk arts as part of this course humanities course for which taught to the undergraduate students. Project called Arting Science is being conducted where science and technology are brought together with art and art is not any general art here folk art is brought together with science and technology and every year student produce different kinds of material which brings together art and art along with science and technology.

So, it can be a visual, it can be performative, it can be narrative. So, every year a different kind of artwork is discussed and students are producing different kinds of

material which a combines science and technology with art. So, now, I am going to give an example how folk art can be brought together with science and technology and how folk art has a vocabulary, has the potential to talk about complex issues of science and technology.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:49)



So, I will give you some of the examples here. So, this is a book which was edited by me and we published this book on 2016 called Arting Science this has which is the compilation of the artwork that students, the undergraduate students of ISC have meet and the the project given to them was to talk about science concept using Indian folk art.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:17)



So, this is Mendel's first law of inheritance in Madhubani, we have already discussed Madhubani painting.

So, the this group was asked to do represent science concept with using Indian folk art and this group chose to do Mendel's first law of inheritance using Madhubani painting. Those photos of you who are aware of this law it says that when two alleles come together in one generation one allele is expressed which is the dominant allele and one is recessive, but in the successive generation three off springs might or three of the dominant might be expressed and one the recessive allele might be expressed.

So, this is just look at the motifs that are used which we have already discussed the fish motif of Madhubani, that is very effectively used to express Mendel's first law.

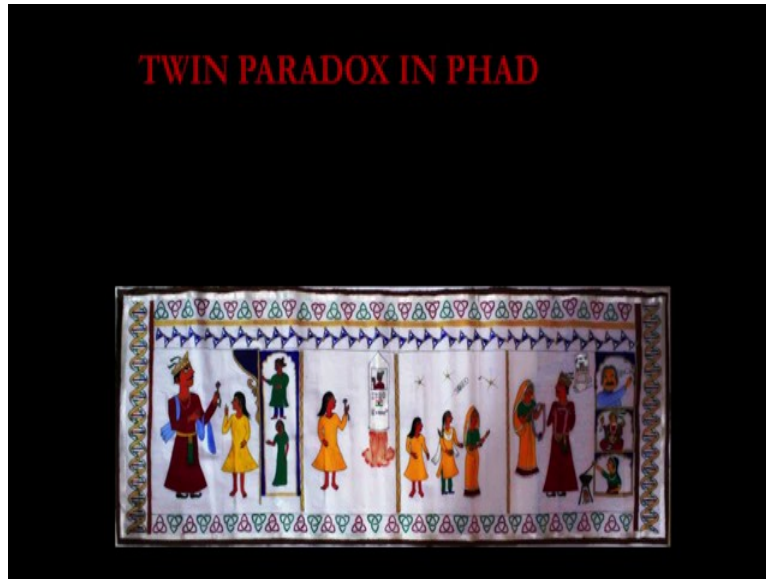
(Refer Slide Time: 22:23)



This is Metamorphosi Sin Church art style. So, metamorphoses for those of is where the any living organism changes its physical appearance, here the caterpillar is turning to a butterfly. It is done in a glass this painting was done in glass which is more common in church around India.

So, here they are showing how the caterpillars turning to butterfly and at the same time there showing some moral values that how gluttony, how anger can be turned to different kinds of positive feelings, the tolerance, intelligence, patience, kindness, charity, how this can actually turn to positive values.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:27)



This is Phad painting, we have also discuss Phad painting in earlier classes which is commonly found in Rajasthan area. Just look at the way this was done in cloth it is a scroll painting which can be rolled, it is a long scroll painting which can be rolled. Here the king is king falls in love with a girl who is much younger to him then he goes to a time machine and he returns after the good and returns back and girl has grown up. So, this is the Phad painting showing twin paradox in Phad.

So, friends today we have seen some example how folk art also has the potential to express science and technology in a very effective way. From the next class onwards, we will see more example, we will see examples not only from painting, but we will see examples from music, dance, theatre and this course is all about exploring scientific and technological research using Indian folk art.

So, we will see how effectively they can express scientific and technological research by using folk medium by using folk art and after that we will implode you to also explore some of the ideas that would come to you after looking at this examples see you in the next class.

Thank you.