

# Role of Swang in Community Upliftment

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## ABSTRACT

Swang is India's most ancient Folk opera Theatre. Folk Theatre is a composite art form in India with a fusion of elements from music, dance, pantomime, versification, epic and ballad recitation, graphic and plastic arts, religion and festival peasantry. Swang having roots in native culture is embedded in local identity and social values. Besides providing mass entertainment, it helps Indian society as indigenous tools of interpersonal, inter-group and inter-village communication for ages. Swang has been used extensively in India to propagate critical social, political and cultural issues in the form of theatrical messages to create awareness among the people. As an indigenous form it breaks all kinds of formal barriers of human communication and appeals directly to the people, Which Realises the importance and powerfulness of this traditional medium. People in rural areas should be approached through traditional folk forms of communication. Bhagat, Mach, Tamasha, Nautanki and all most all the folk theatre is generated from Swang. Folk Theatre forms in India are traditional way of Communication and enriched cultural heritage and used for addressing social evils, social progress and for bringing various changes in the society. Different forms of Folk Theatre in India are traditional way of Communication and constitute a potential source for conveying messages for Social, Economic and Cultural Development, which ultimately helps in overall National Development.

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## INTRODUCTION

Folk Theatre is a composite art form in India with a fusion of elements from music, dance, pantomime, versification, epic and ballad recitation, graphic and plastic arts, religion and festival peasantry. The Folk theatre having roots in native culture is embedded in local identity and social values. Folk theatre as an old form of Communication is a deep-rooted tradition in India's vibrant culture. Folk Theatre is a composite art in India with a fusion of elements from music, dance, pantomime, versification, epic and ballad recitation, graphic and plastic arts, religion and festival peasantry. The Folk theatre having roots in native culture, is embedded in local identity and social values besides providing mass entertainment helped Indian society as indigenous tools of interpersonal, inter-group and inter-village communication for ages. Folk theatre has been used extensively in India to propagate critical social, political and cultural issues in the form of theatrical messages to create awareness among the people. As an indigenous form it breaks all kinds of formal barriers of human communication and appeals directly to the people. Each folk theatre form has a particular community, language, area and way of life. But music is the only binder which attaches all the forms together. Many religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Vaisnavism, Saivism have a great influence on the thematic structure of various folk theatre forms.

India has its complex social system which comprises different castes, classes, creeds and tribes. The high rate of illiteracy added to the inadequacy of mass media to reach almost 80 percent of India's 121 crore population who reside in villages. In spite of various national literacy campaigns with 74.04 percent literacy rate, to most of the people, mass media proved impersonal and unbelievable in contrast with the familiar performance of traditional artists whom the villagers "could not only see and hear but even touch". Traditional Media can be used to reach these people in the process of change and development of India.

Communication embodies an important human behavior and helps in the process of Social, Political and Cultural transformation of a society. Each and every society around the world evolves its own appropriate systems of Communication to perform the function of societal transformation which ultimately gave birth to various performing arts. In this process, tradition plays a vital role to create the artistic processes-the indigenous tools of human communication.

Theatre in India started as a narrative form, with recitation, singing and dancing becoming its integral elements. This emphasis on narrative elements made our theatre essentially theatrical right from the beginning. That is why the theatre in India has encompassed all the other forms of literature and fine arts into its physical presentation: literature, mime, music, dance, 4 movement, painting, sculpture and architecture - all mixed into one and being called 'Natya' or Swang

### **Folk Theatre forms of India**

Folk Theatre is linked with the change of political set up in India as well as the coming into existence of different regional languages in all parts of the country. The classical theatre was based on 'Natyasastra' was much more sophisticated in its form and nature and totally urban-oriented. On the contrary, the traditional theatre evolved out of rural roots and was more simple, immediate and closer to the rural minds.

Historically speaking, it was during the 15th -16th century that the folk theatre emerged forcefully in different regions. It used different languages, the languages of the regions in which it emerged. Initially these were purely devotional in tenor and typically revolved around religion, local legends and mythology. Later, with changing times, it became more secular in content and began to focus on folk stories of romance and valour and biographical accounts of local heroes.

Indian folk theatre can be broadly divided into two broad categories -- religious and secular -- giving rise to the Ritual Theatre and Theatre of Entertainment respectively. The two forms thrived together, mutually influencing each other. Although they are considered as Folk theatre traditions, some of them have all the attributes of a classical theatre. Most often the folk and traditional forms are mainly narrative or vocal, i.e. singing and recitation-based like Ramlila, Rasleela, Nautanki and Swang, without any complicated gestures or movements and elements of dance. Although there are some broad similarities. The south Indian forms emphasize on dance forms like Kathakali and Krishnattam of Kerala and actually qualify as dance dramas, while the north Indian forms emphasize on songs, like the Khyal of Rajasthan, the Maach of Madhya Pradesh, the Nautanki of Uttar Pradesh and the Saang of Haryana. The Jaatra of Bengal, Tamasha of Maharashtra and the Bhavai of Gujarat stress on dialogues in their execution, the latter two emphasize on comedy and satire. Puppet theatre also flourished at many places in India.

### **Communication with Community**

In India, since independence in 1947, development efforts have been based on a conceptual scheme in Development Communication (DEVCOM); DEVCOM experiments and Government efforts to do development for people and people's efforts to assimilate and achieve development. Indian Development context particularly suggests that the development communication efforts are focused on three aspects of development

- 1) Development of quality of life for all through basic development projects of education, health, nutrition, and housing
- 2) Development of poor, marginal by poverty elimination projects by creating employment opportunities and providing subsidies
- 3) Development of rural population lives in rural areas and has limitations of economic resources, literacy and constraints of reaching target audience.

The Communication Perspective for development such as communication policies, strategies, messages and channels to do development is specific to each country. These depend on number of factors which are availability of communication technologies, physical and social access to these technologies, literacy, people's self-reliance and participation and material-social resources. During the first development decade the stress was on national development through social growth. The models of community development and Panchayat Raj were in essence participatory communication and Basic Needs Models, though they were not anything like that. Most of the international development communities were going with the Dominant Paradigm. In the Second development decade India gave stress on Dominant Paradigm –modernization through industrialization. Communication is inextricably related to participatory approaches. If development is to have occurred in real sense it must perceive the people real own needs, their problems and solutions of these in their own terms.

### **Swang and Community Upliftment**

In India people in rural areas should be approached through traditional-folk forms of communication. These folk art forms represents on various aspects of national integration, communal harmony, domestic values and development activities. Special stress is laid on prohibition, eradication of untouchability, family planning, women empowerment, principles of democracy, fundamental rights, rural health schemes, small-scale industries, agricultural technologies, and different aspects of socio-economic change. State Governments have been the biggest users of Folk Theatre for propagation of developmental programmes among the masses. Similarly, the Directorate of Field Publicity and the Departments of Public Relations and Information in the states have employed these media extensively for the purpose of informing the people about services and programmes made available by the Government and make them persuaded to accept the modern ideas and change their attitudes and behaviors accordingly. The other Government Departments such as the Department of Science and Technology, the National Institute of Design and the Space Application Centre produced many programmes using folk theatres. Not only the government departments, but the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) also use folk theatre medium for developmental purposes.

SWANG is one of the most well-structural crystallized forms of folk theatre in India. Swang successfully projects the social and the cultural needs of the people in the region and serves as a vehicle of political education. Historically, the theme of Swang's morality projecting war between good and evil and this characteristic is well-preserved as well as utilized for specific ends through the decades. Swang describes different types of burning social problems have been presented through this form. Thus from a small beginning it became a powerful medium with the potential of communicating with the high and the low, the literate and the illiterate, the religious congregation and the popular masses alike. Even during elections Swang is one of the popular modes for campaigning. Swang is originated from satirical verses, long winding story-telling and parody based on interacting dialogue. This is the rare folk theatre form of India in which the feminine roles are played by the women. Swang with its variation has become an important tool for spreading ideologies, government propaganda and presenting the inner void of urban intellectual. Government and NGOs used folk theatre shows to promote the developmental processes. This theatre is integrated in the ritual observances and the social milieu of rural people in India. Swang is a flexible form of traditional communication and a powerful medium for development and communication.

### CONCLUSION

Folk Theatre grew out of the situations, experiences, and analysis of the actors. They create their own dramas out of their own collective analysis of their immediate situation and the deeper structures in which they are embedded. This is a genuine expression of the people. Folk Theatre forms quicker transmission of information as it was motivating the audience. Folk Theatre forms in India are traditional way of Communication and enriched cultural heritage. It constitutes a potential source for conveying messages for Social, Economic and Cultural Development which ultimately helps in overall National Development. Henceforth, it is our soul duty on the part of the Communication Researchers, Policy Makers, Government and the participants-the People to shoulder the responsibility of preserving and propagating the forms of Folk Theatre.

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