



335en28A

COMMUNICATING THROUGH TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Communication is a dynamic process. It happens all the time. Your posture, the way in which you walk, talk or carry out your work communicates something or the other. Even your dress, accessories and ornaments communicate.

For example, by looking at a person, it may be possible to say that the person belongs to a certain place or that the dress worn is from a particular state.

In this lesson, you will learn about the importance of traditional media as a tool of communication. You will also learn about the use of traditional media for creating awareness on social issues and the future of traditional media.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- explain the importance of traditional media as a tool of communication;
- describe traditional media as a part of socio-cultural and ritual communication;
- identify the use of traditional media for social issues;
- discuss the future of traditional media.

28.1 COMMUNICATING THROUGH TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Have you ever wondered how people without electricity, literacy and basic technological infrastructure access information? How do they communicate? What is the medium of communication they use?

Millions of people living in remote areas in developing countries do not have access to mass media like television. For example to watch a television you need electricity, to read a newspaper literacy is required. For radio also, radio receivers and a tower are required to receive the signals. For people living without electricity and other facilities this might create problems to access information.

But this is not the case with traditional media. It requires only a certain amount of space to perform. For example, a street play can be performed in front of a tea stall or under the shadow of a tree. It is therefore a flexible, live and natural medium to communicate with the audience.



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Fig. 28.1: Traditional media : flexible, live and natural

You have already learnt that communication is a basic human need. Everybody needs to communicate and be communicated. For communication to reach a common person, it must be simple and free from language barriers. Traditional media fulfills these requirements.

Traditional media are vehicles of communication which are rich in variety. They are readily available and economically viable. Men and women of different age groups enjoy them. They win the confidence of rural masses, as they are live. In fact, traditional media create a **'face to face situation'** between the communicator and the receiver of the message.

Have you ever seen a puppet show or a street theatre performance? These are the modern forms of traditional media which have adopted various techniques and forms from traditional forms such as drama, story telling, song and music. Do they communicate any message to you? Any media that you watch will have one or more messages.

You have studied in your earlier lessons about the use of advertisements in the mass media. **Traditional media are free from such advertisements.** This is one of the unique characteristics of traditional media. Mass media, being funded



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blend : mixture

by the advertisers might result in sometimes becoming biased or filling the media with the content which is not relevant to the common people. Traditional media being free from advertisements communicate what is always need based and purposeful. They try to share messages about various facets of a problem or issue and convey information which will benefit the audience.

Entertainment is always a part of traditional media. Along with entertainment, educating the audience on various issues is an important characteristic of traditional media. Entertainment is one of the interesting ways to involve the audience. Messages are communicated with a blend of entertainment, education and communication. They do not create any false desires or expectations.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 28.1**

1. From the list given below, pick out the characteristics of traditional media.
 - i) caters well to rural areas
 - ii) requires basic infrastructure
 - iii) requires electricity
 - iv) need based medium
 - v) involves entertainment
 - vi) creates expectations or false desires in the audience
 - vii) flexible medium
 - viii) natural medium
 - ix) consists of language barriers
 - x) consists of advertisements

28.2 TRADITIONAL MEDIA AS A PART OF SOCIO-CULTURAL AND RITUAL COMMUNICATION

Have you ever noticed that every festival in a village has either some performances or games related to it or some traditional motifs and paintings. You will also find that people in a village get together and participate actively in festivals. There are sometimes separate games and activities for the old and young, men, women and children. Participating in these games will not only yield relaxation but also entertainment and develop team spirit amongst the people. Have you participated in such games ?

These are one of the best forms of communication . You notice that communication always flows in these activities. They are intimate and personal and effective for easy adoption.



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Fig. 28.2: A traditional game

Traditional media forms are a part of the way of life of a community and provide acceptable means of bringing development issues into the community on its own terms. In India, they have proven to be successful mass motivators. You have already learnt that traditional media played a significant role in the freedom movement of India.

India has a history of using traditional media for communicating development messages to the masses. Let us see how this was done.

Traditional performances like ritualistic dances, religious songs and mythology based rural plays which are highly popular, have been used to convey messages on population, health and hygiene to the rural masses. Communicators, therefore, have to test different categories of traditional performances to identify the ones that are flexible enough to absorb development messages to meet the contemporary needs; flexibility is the most important factor. It determines the viability of a traditional medium for rural communication.

Cross cultural communication hurdles are not encountered here. Though these mediums are culture and regional specific, they can communicate the solidarity and friendship with each other through non verbal communication. Performances and fine arts need no language.

Have you observed communication practices in a market place, exhibition or a social gathering? When people get together at one place, communication flows among them and there is always a possibility of discussion on various issues .



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What do you understand here? A social, ritual or cultural gathering will initiate a discussion and communication begins. A market, festival, ritual, village fair or a celebration are all situations where traditional communication takes place.

But for every situation you require a separate mode of communication. The uniqueness of traditional media helps to cater to the specific needs of these situations.

**Activity 28.1**

Can you identify any other form of public communication places where social, cultural and ritual communication takes place.

Traditional media like street plays, songs and dances have a special role in harnessing developmental messages in India. Various governmental bodies like Song and Drama Division, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations use traditional media for creating awareness amongst people. Their primary appeal is to the emotion rather than intellect. They utilize an immense variety of forms and themes to suit the communication requirements of the masses.

**IN-TEXT QUESTIONS 28.2**

1. Recall at least three occasions/ situations in which the traditional form of communication takes place.
 - i)
 - ii)
 - iii)
2. List three forms of traditional media used to communicate development messages to people.
 - i)
 - ii)
 - iii)

28.3 APPLICATIONS OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Communication through traditional media is always respected among various communities. Do you know why? Because these are rooted in one's own culture and tradition. These will create a space for respect, friendship and understanding.

Do you know that traditional media can be used to create awareness and sensitise people on various social issues? For example, it may not be easy to create awareness on an issue such as HIV/ AIDS using face to face communication.



Such an issue can be explained through a puppet show which may be more convenient and effective. Traditional media is very useful to deal with sensitive issues of health, where face to face communication may not be suitable. During the freedom struggle also many of these performing arts have played a vital role in spreading the spirit of freedom movement. In our country, the government has been successful in spreading messages of family planning, polio immunisation etc. through traditional media.

Have you heard of the term '**ballad**'? A ballad is a poem usually set to music and is often a story told in the form of a song. Ballads are also referred to as 'bullets' because they are very powerful and can communicate effectively. Issues relating to the environment, energy conservation, dowry etc. made simple and sung publicly using the ballad form. Such songs are often humorous also. The rhythmic play of words in a ballad make the messages work effectively on listeners.

Street theatre is a combination of traditional theatre forms and uses its techniques. Due to their flexibility in staging the short play at any place at any time, they always have an audience for their messages. The mix of songs, drama and music make the messages on social issues like child labour, individual differences, environment, health issues, women etc motivate viewers and leave an unforgettable impact.

While using traditional media for spreading social messages, the original form of media should not be changed. There is always the risk of distorting these forms of traditional mediums while using them for conveying messages on social issues. One must use them carefully without hurting the style, form and presentation of these forms.



IN-TEXT QUESTIONS 28.3

1. What do you understand by 'ballads'.
2. List any two environmental issues for which you can use traditional media?

28.4 FUTURE OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Sustainability

When you go to a movie hall to watch a film or to a cyber café to access the internet, you have to pay some money. That money will be used for sustaining those mediums of communication. It is in a similar manner that traditional forms of media also manage to sustain themselves. After a performance, viewers generally contribute money to keep the artists and the art alive. It is the people, rather our parents and grandparents who have contributed to these art forms. The money



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which comes from the audience helps them to survive, grow and contribute more innovative programmes from time to time.

But do you know that many of these mediums are rapidly disappearing? This amounts to losing our culture and tradition. Presently many of the performers, due to the advent of television and other modern mass media have changed their creative professions. It is a dangerous situation to lose one's own past and cultural history. These mediums are not taught in schools or universities. But they are learnt by interested young people to carry them from one generation to another generation. There are many oral traditions of which there is no written documentation. The stories and songs are orally learnt from each other and preserved in the minds of the people. If there are no takers of these mediums, then these mediums will gradually be lost.

After studying the four lessons on traditional media, you might have understood how important these mediums are for our well being. But how do we make these mediums survive? Who is going to take the responsibility? It is you, and your friends. Our society needs to contribute to save these mediums. We can encourage these mediums by viewing, writing, talking, and learning about them and as a whole knowing them.

The government of India is using these mediums for spreading awareness on health, environment and other social issues among masses. For revival and survival of traditional media, the government has established bodies like the Song and Drama division, Sangeet Natak Akadamy, Lalit Kala Academy, Directorate of Audio-Visual Publicity etc. at the national, state and district levels.

The advent of modern mass media technologies which have started recording these mediums are posing a threat to these mediums. Though mass media has its potentiality in mass communication, traditional mediums are always simple and useful for better human relations.

Change is inevitable. The changing face of communication and media is limiting the space for traditional media. The debate these days is how far one can retain these mediums in their own forms? With the changing audience, these forms are also affected by modern technologies and themes. Stories of 'raja' and 'rani' or mythological stories and themes are fast disappearing. Performers are leaving their creative arts because of lack of financial support and patronage from people.

As long as this media form is respected, they can be kept alive for future generations. These are all great treasures of our culture and tradition.



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But the challenge that lies ahead of us is to save the few traditional forms of media from fast eroding and reviving the older forms to present them for future generations.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 28.4

1. Name any two government bodies which are promoting traditional media?
2. List two ways in which traditional forms of media can be preserved.



28.5 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

→ Traditional media – a part of socio-cultural and ritual communication

Applications of traditional media

- creating awareness on social issues
- sensitizing people on various issues

Future of traditional media

- sustainability



28.6 TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. Describe the role of traditional media :
 - i) as a vehicle of communication
 - ii) as a part of socio-cultural and ritualistic communication
2. Explain how we can use traditional media for development issues?
3. Discuss the problems faced by traditional media forms for their survival?



28.7 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

28.1 1. i), iv), vii), viii)

- 28.2 1. i) communication in a social gathering
 ii) communication during festivals
 iii) communication at village fairs
 iv) any other
2. i) street plays
 ii) religious songs
 iii) ritualistic dances
 iv) any other



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- 28.3**
1. Refer to section 28.3.
 2.
 - i) Save the Earth
 - ii) ban on use of plastics
 - iii) any other
- 28.4**
1.
 - i) Song and Drama Division
 - ii) Lalit Kala Academy
 - iii) any other
 2.
 - i) watching traditional performances
 - ii) writing about traditional media
 - iii) any other