



# Empowering Communities: Traditional Folk Media's Role in Health, Education, Tourism and Women's Issues

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**Abstract:** In the 21st century, as new and electronic media expand, the relevance of traditional folk media in promoting health, education, tourism, and women's issues in rural areas of developing countries is a subject of inquiry. Despite the appeal of modern media, traditional folk media remains significant due to its strong connection with audiences based on religious, cultural, and linguistic affinities. These forms of art resonate with the population through shared beliefs, folklore, fables, and cultural requirements. They effectively convey information and education while fostering acceptance of scientific and developmental changes in rural communities, which can be resistant to change. India, with its rich heritage of folk media, still showcases these traditions during rural festivities, offering a platform for communicating informative and educational content. The paper underscores the immense potential of traditional folk media in development communication and calls for greater emphasis on their role in promoting health, education, tourism, and women's issues.

**Keywords - Folk Media, Communication, Information, Population**

## Introduction

Traditional folk media, in yesteryears, held a central role as a means of entertainment, information dissemination, education, and cultural communication. India, in particular, boasts a rich heritage in the realm of folk communication. These art forms were deeply rooted in the essence of their originating communities and locales. Local chieftains, kings, and the public alike were patrons of these art forms since they constituted the primary avenue for popular expression in their respective regions, especially during eras when technological advancements were limited, and mass communication channels were scarce. Folk art emanated from the vernacular language, culture, religion, and beliefs of specific geographic demographics, intricately interwoven with the daily lives of the populace. These artistic expressions resonated with popular culture, beliefs, history, myths, and the ancient literary works, epics, and religious scriptures of their respective areas.

As such, the various forms of folk media, encompassing music, songs, dances, and theatrical performances, served as the principal medium for the dissemination of information, moral guidance, physical well-being, cultural identity, pride, romantic narratives, and entertainment for the masses. While new media has proven to be highly effective and precise in communication, it encounters challenges in rural contexts due to its divergence from local beliefs, resistance to change, and the disconnect from indigenous myths and folklore.

Folk media, by contrast, offers a cost-effective, flexible, and inherently captivating means of communication tailored to specific audiences. Assessing the efficacy of folk media in promoting health, education, tourism, and women's issues may be challenging, but behavioral changes within the target audience provide a viable yardstick for measurement. Folk media initiatives are typically structured in three stages: an awareness program preceding the implementation of government development projects, an awareness program during project implementation, and a follow-up program after project completion to ensure long-term impact.

Folk media plays a pivotal role in two aspects: firstly, it prepares the rural environment for the introduction of other media forms, including new media, to further educate and implement development programs with detailed information; and secondly, it contributes to the content of these newer media forms. In this way, folk media serves as a crucial catalyst in influencing audiences to embrace developmental changes and paves the way for other contemporary media to build upon this foundation. For instance, during the 1970s, folk media effectively conveyed messages related to family planning in India. Organizations such as the States Innovation in Family Planning Services Project Agency (SIFSPA) in Uttar Pradesh and the Foundation of Ecological Society (FES), which ran the 'Shamlat Abhiyan' in Rajasthan, stand as testament to the effectiveness of folk media in this regard.

The fundamental tenets of communication theory, which involve sender, medium, receiver, and feedback, find profound application in folk art as it involves physical, live performances before the audience by the performer or producer, rendering it instrumental and highly effective across various facets of human life.

## Review Of Literature

The study draws upon the insights of several prominent researchers who have delved into the realm of traditional folk media and its significance in various cultural and social contexts.

Ms. Rekha Bhagat, affiliated with the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in India, emphasizes the significance of understanding the unique communication patterns within each society. Communication forms are best comprehended when considered within the socio-cultural context of the society they belong to. Communication, as a process, has existed throughout human history. Every nation has, over its historical development, cultivated distinct forms of folk art to fulfill the fundamental needs of disseminating information, preserving culture, providing entertainment, and imparting education to their respective communities. Ms. Bhagat conducted a study in Nagpur district, Maharashtra, India, focusing on three villages:

Ghorad, Budhala, and Kaniyadhhol. She selected five prominent traditional media forms, namely Tamasha, Bhajan, Kirtan, Dhandhar, and Quawaly. These performances were typically presented during festivals like Diwali. The study revealed that Tamasha and bhajans enjoyed the highest popularity, with prevalent themes revolving around social development, agriculture, and patriotic songs.

Dr. Raghavendra Mishra, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mass Communication at Assam University, Silchar, and Shri K. Newme, a Research Scholar in the same department, highlight the underrepresentation of tribal communities' concerns and issues in mainstream mass media, particularly in Northeast India. They argue that traditional folk media remains highly relevant as it authentically reflects the daily social life of these communities. Tribal populations strongly identify with folklores, songs, and dance forms, using these art forms to satisfy their moral and emotional needs. Folk media, thus, serves as a crucial means of communication that resonates deeply with tribal populations, effectively conveying messages and information.

Dr. Neeru Prasad, in her paper titled "Folk Media: An Active Media for Communication Campaigns In the Digital Era," underscores the impact of culture on the communication process. The cultural attributes of the sender, including their attitudes, educational background, and beliefs, must align with those of the receiver for effective communication. Dr. Prasad highlights that in contemporary media, differences in cultural attributes between senders and receivers often lead to distorted and incomplete communication. Folk media, being rooted in the local culture and demography, possesses the advantage of shared linguistic and cultural attributes between sender and receiver. This aspect is particularly pertinent in India, given its vast diversity in population, culture, and language. Dr. Prasad references numerous folk tales, songs, and dances in the context of Rajasthan to illustrate the state's cultural richness, citing the well-known romantic folk tale of Dhola-Maru.

## **Methodology**

This research paper employed a mixed-method approach, incorporating both primary and secondary data sources to conduct a comprehensive study.

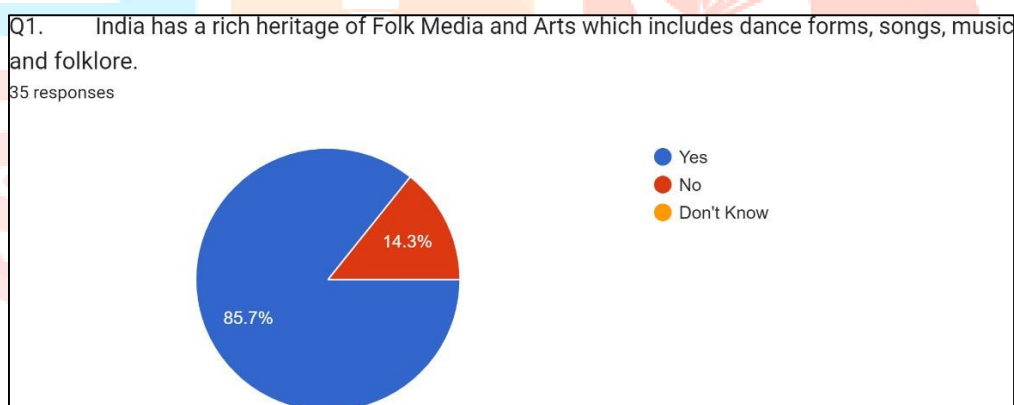
For the acquisition of primary data, a structured sample survey questionnaire consisting of ten questions was meticulously formulated. This questionnaire was subsequently disseminated via an online platform, specifically Google Forms. The survey garnered responses from a sample size of 35 respondents, constituting a diverse cross-section of society. These respondents were professionals representing various fields of study, with a prerequisite of possessing a minimum educational qualification at the graduate level.

In parallel, secondary data was meticulously collected through an extensive review of scholarly research papers, as well as pertinent information obtained from government and non-government sources. This comprehensive secondary data was supplemented by a review of various internet resources, enhancing the depth and breadth of the research findings. A comprehensive list of these secondary sources is diligently cited in the reference section of this paper, underscoring the research's foundation on a robust and well-rounded knowledge base.

## Data Collection and Data Analysis

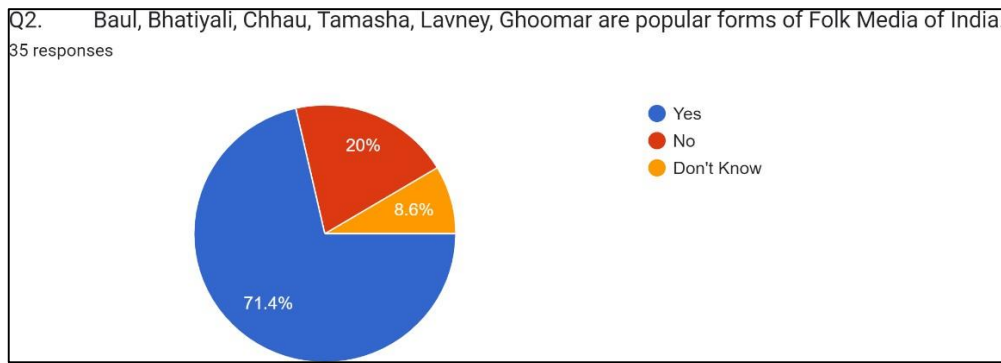
In this study, the analysis of primary data derived from an internet-based survey report was conducted using a pie chart. The survey, which obtained responses from a sample size of 35 respondents, was administered via an online questionnaire designed to solicit inputs and feedback from participants.

As for the secondary data, an extensive review of prior research papers pertaining to the subject matter was undertaken. This review encompassed the extraction of relevant statistical information from a variety of research papers, as well as data from government and non-government sources. The research findings were augmented and enriched by the comprehensive examination of these secondary data sources.



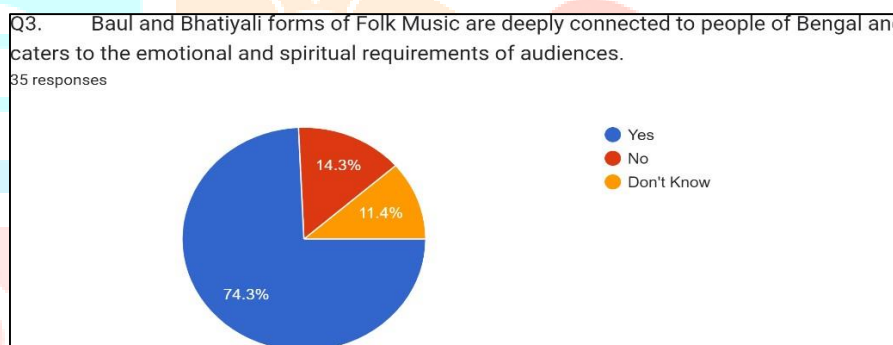
**Figure 1:** Data Analysis and Interpretation for India's Rich Heritage Awareness

Among the 35 respondents who participated in the sample survey, a significant majority, precisely 30 individuals (85.7%), expressed the opinion that India possesses a culturally rich heritage of Folk Media and Arts. In contrast, a smaller fraction of the respondents, specifically 5 individuals (14.3%), held a contrary viewpoint on this matter.



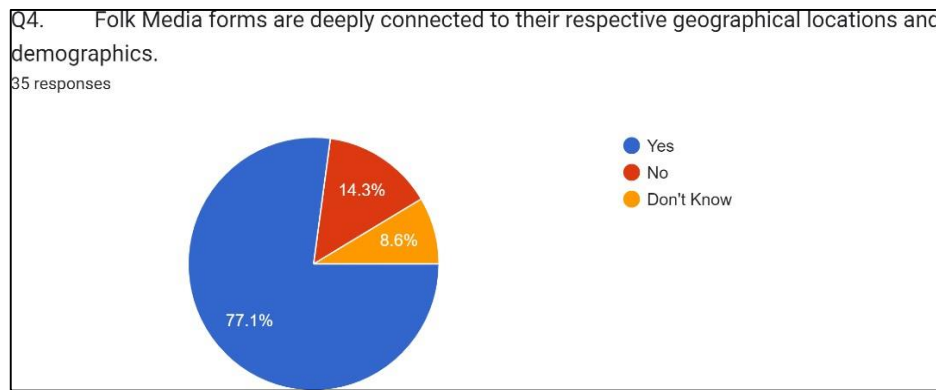
**Figure 2:** Data Analysis and Interpretation for Different Popular Forms of Folk Media.

In response to the query regarding the popularity of Baul, Bhatiyali, Chhau, Tamasha, Lavney, and Ghoomar as forms of Folk Media in India, a significant majority, specifically 25 respondents (71.4%), answered affirmatively, confirming their recognition and popularity. In contrast, 7 respondents answered negatively, indicating that they do not consider these forms as popular. Additionally, 3 respondents expressed their lack of knowledge on the subject.



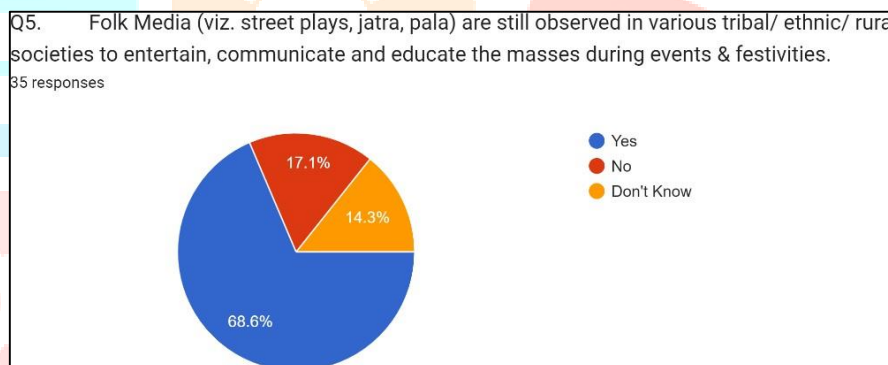
**Figure 3:** Data Analysis and Interpretation for Folk Music Deeply Connected with People.

In response to the inquiry regarding the connection of Baul and Bhatiyali forms of Folk Music to the people of Bengal, specifically in meeting the emotional and spiritual needs of the audience, the majority, comprising 26 respondents (74.3%), concurred with this sentiment, acknowledging the deep-rooted connection of these musical forms with the people and their ability to cater to emotional and spiritual requirements. In contrast, 5 respondents expressed disagreement with this notion, while 4 respondents indicated a lack of knowledge or were uncertain about the matter.



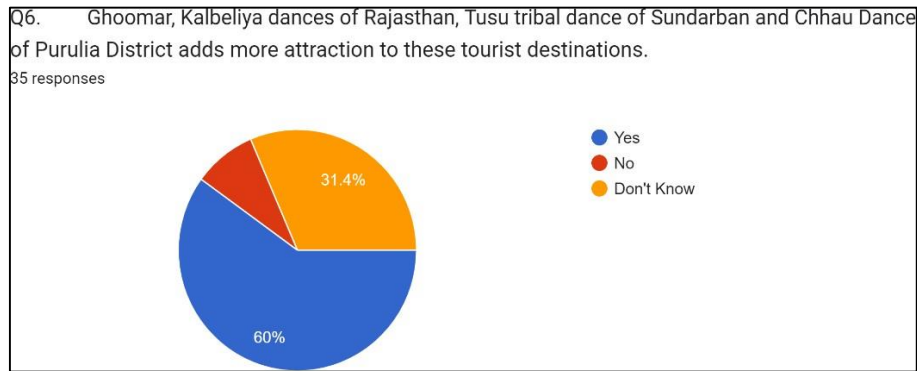
**Figure 4:** Data Analysis and Interpretation for Folk Media's Geographical Location & Demographics.

In response to the query regarding the connection of Folk Media forms to their specific geographical locations and demographics, a significant majority of 27 respondents (77.1%) concurred with this notion, acknowledging the deep-seated connection of Folk Media to their respective locales and population. However, 5 respondents expressed dissent, indicating a differing viewpoint. Additionally, 3 respondents admitted their lack of knowledge on this subject.



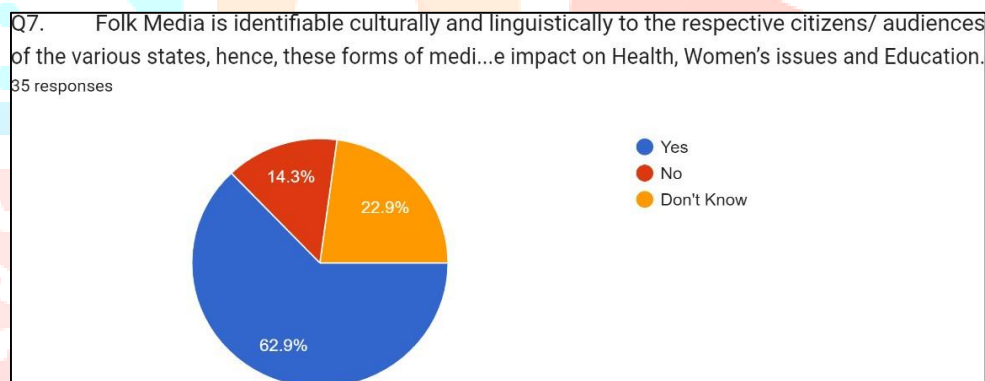
**Figure 5:** Data Analysis and Interpretation For Folk Media's Existence in Different Festivals And Events.

In response to the query regarding the observance of Folk Media, such as street plays, jatra, and pala, within diverse tribal, ethnic, and rural societies as a means of entertaining, communicating, and educating the masses during events and festivities, a substantial majority of 24 respondents (68.6%) confirmed the continued practice of these forms. However, 6 respondents expressed disagreement with this perspective, signifying a contrasting view. Furthermore, 5 respondents conveyed their uncertainty on the subject.



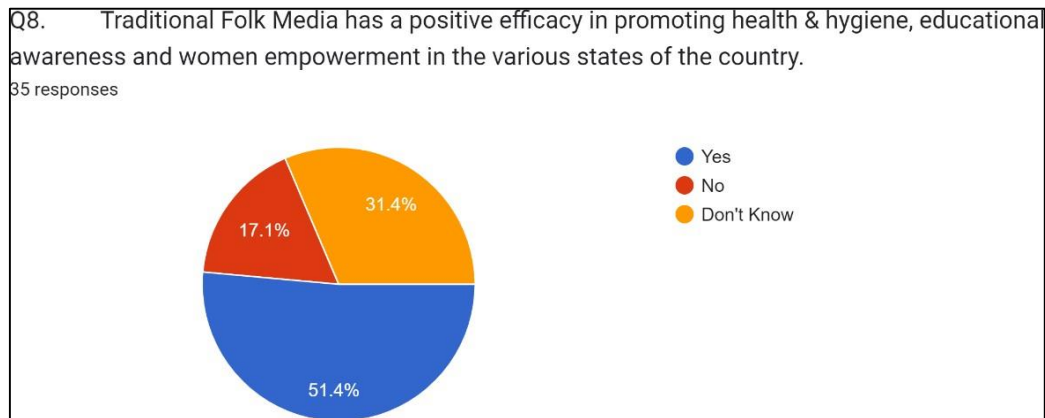
**Figure 6:** Data Analysis and Interpretation for Different District & State Based Folk Media.

In response to the query regarding whether the inclusion of dances like Ghoomar and Kalbeliya in Rajasthan, the Tusu tribal dance in Sundarban, and the Chhau Dance in the Purulia District enhances the appeal of these tourist destinations, 21 respondents (60%) concurred, affirming that these dance forms indeed add more attraction. Conversely, 3 respondents disagreed with this notion, indicating a different perspective. Additionally, 11 respondents expressed their lack of knowledge or uncertainty on this topic.



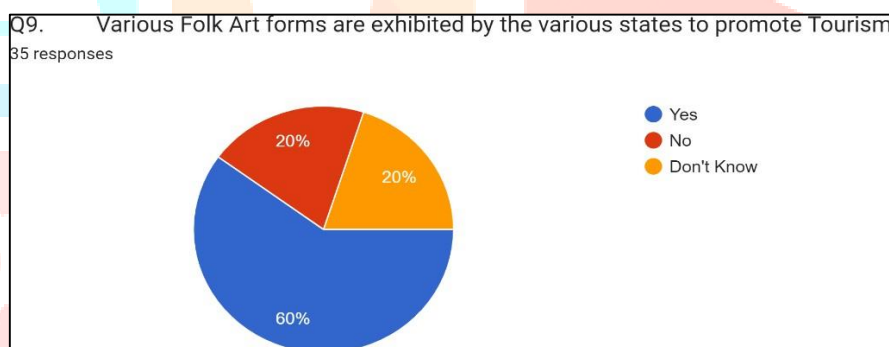
**Figure 7:** Data Analysis and Interpretation for Folk Media's Cultural and Linguistic Alignment with the Respective Citizens.

Among the respondents, 22 individuals (62.9%) asserted that Folk Media's cultural and linguistic alignment with the respective citizens and audiences of various states empowers these media forms to establish a potent connection with the populace, thereby potentially exerting a positive impact on Health, Women's issues, and Education. In contrast, 5 respondents (14.3%) held a dissenting perspective, while 8 respondents remained non-committal or uncertain on the matter.



**Figure 8:** Data Analysis and Interpretation for Promoting Health and Hygiene, Educational Awareness.

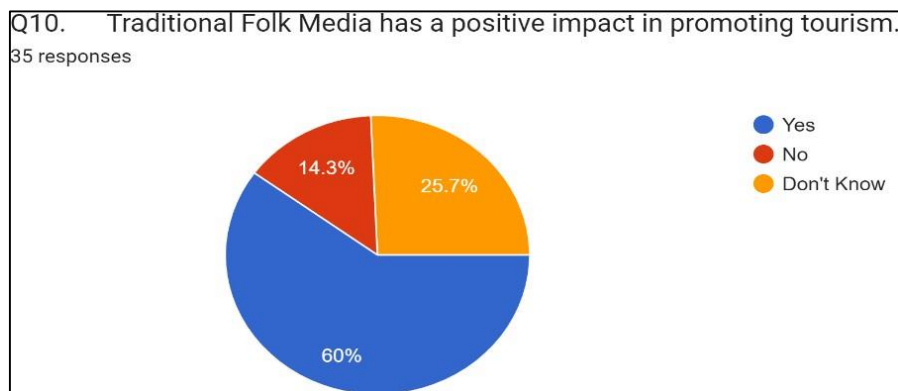
In the survey, 18 respondents, representing 51.4% of the total, expressed the view that Traditional Folk Media plays a valuable role in positively promoting health and hygiene, educational awareness, and women's empowerment within different states of the country. In contrast, 6 respondents (17.1%) held a differing perspective, believing that these traditional media forms do not contribute positively to these areas. Additionally, 11 respondents indicated their lack of knowledge or uncertainty regarding this subject.



**Figure 9:** Data Analysis and Interpretation for Various States Exhibit Various Folk Art Forms to Promote Tourism.

Out of the total respondents, 21 individuals (60%) expressed the belief that various states exhibit various Folk Art forms to promote tourism. The remaining 14 respondents (40%) were evenly divided, with 7 respondents holding an opposing viewpoint and the other 7 remaining non-committal or uncertain on the matter.





**Figure 10:** Data Analysis and Interpretation for Traditional Folk Media Exerts a Positive Influence on The Promotion of Tourism.

Among the 35 respondents, 21 individuals, constituting 60% of the sample, held the perspective that Traditional Folk Media exerts a positive influence on the promotion of tourism. Conversely, 5 respondents (14.3%) expressed a dissenting view, while 9 respondents (25.7%) remained non-committal or uncertain on this subject.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Several significant conclusions have arisen from the data analysis conducted in this study. It is unequivocally established that India possesses a profoundly rich heritage of Folk Media and Arts. The survey results indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents demonstrated awareness and recognition of various forms of folk media, notably including Baul, Bhatiyali, Chhau, Tamasha, Lavney, and Ghoomar. These forms of folk art emerge as crucial in addressing the emotional and spiritual needs of the audiences.

Additionally, the study affirms the inherent connection of folk media to the specific geographical locations and demographics of the regions in which they originate. This connection underscores the integral role played by folk media within the cultural fabric of these areas. Furthermore, the survey responses validate the continued observance of folk media, encompassing street plays, jatra, and pala, in diverse tribal, ethnic, and rural societies. These media forms persist in their role of entertaining, communicating, and educating the masses, particularly during significant events and festivities.

Importantly, the data underscores the positive impact of folk art on tourism and its role in addressing women's issues. Furthermore, secondary data gathered from various internet sources provides compelling evidence of traditional folk media's efficacy in promoting health, education, tourism, and women's issues. The widespread acceptance of folk media within rural communities positions it as a cornerstone, facilitating the dissemination of developmental information with a high level of acceptance among the audience. As demonstrated, folk media plays a pivotal role in information dissemination, reaching millions of people across thousands of panchayats in the country and actively contributing to on-ground actions.

Consequently, it can be posited that in India, folk media serves three principal functions:

- I. Preservation of the Art itself.
- II. Communication of development and educational issues, along with entertainment during festive occasions.
- III. Facilitating the use of folk media to promote development, education, and information through contemporary media forms, including new media.

The effectiveness of traditional folk media vis-à-vis mainstream contemporary mass media can be attributed to various factors, including its organic evolution within rural settings, linguistic and cultural proximity to the audience, the incorporation of non-verbal communication methods tailored to specific demographics, lower literacy requirements, and its adaptability and responsiveness to audience feedback. In contrast, contemporary mass media and new media often exhibit urban-centric biases and are less capable of fostering the strong bonds with rural populations that folk media effortlessly achieves.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is evident that traditional folk media remains a potent and effective tool for disseminating information and conveying essential messages related to health, education, tourism, and women's issues. Many states and local governing authorities continue to harness the power of this rich Indian heritage for the betterment of society. However, there is a pressing need for increased support and patronage from both state and union governments to fully unlock the potential of these art forms in addressing critical areas of health, development, women's issues, and tourism.

It is incumbent upon society to reinvigorate and preserve the invaluable cultural heritage and art forms that have been passed down through generations. While these art forms should adapt and evolve to remain relevant, they must not be diluted merely to achieve fleeting popularity among the masses. Instead, they should be nurtured and revitalized to safeguard the unique identities and diverse cultural traditions of our vast and diverse nation. This collective effort is vital to ensure that these art forms continue to thrive and contribute to the rich tapestry of our cultural heritage.

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