(Street Theatre, Folk Media & Folk Song)

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Alternate Media:

Alternative media are media which provide alternative information to the mainstream media in a given context, whether the mainstream media are commercial, publicly supported, or government-owned. Alternative media differ from mainstream media along one or more of the following dimensions: their content, aesthetic, modes of production, modes of distribution, and audience relations. Alternative media often aim to challenge existing powers, to represent marginalized groups, and to foster horizontal linkages among communities of interest. Proponents of alternative media argue that the mainstream media are biased in the selection and framing of news and information. While sources of alternative media can also be biased, proponents claim that the bias is significantly different than that of the mainstream media because they have a different set of values, objectives, and frameworks. Hence these media provide an "alternative" viewpoint, different information and interpretations of the world that cannot be found in the mainstream. Because the term "alternative" has connotations of self-marginalization, some media outlets now prefer the term "independent" over "alternative".

There are plenty of **alternative media examples**, but there isn't one specific definition of alternative media. The various sources of information and publications that fall outside of the mainstream have been referred to by many names. They have been called alternative, anarchist, small, activist, grassroots, progressive, non-corporate, subversive underground, radical, dissident, independent and many other terms.

For the most part, definitions of alternative media and the alternative press are less concerned with describing what the alternative media is and more preoccupied with describing what it is not. It is not mainstream, for example, and neither is it corporate owned. However, any insightful person can see that this definition merely passes on the burden of alternative media definition to mainstream media.

Most criteria for determining whether a news source counts as alternative media or not are based on a number of questions: Is it corporate owned? What is its content (news that is either repressed or misreported by the mainstream media)? How is it produced and distributed (the internet is the most popular outlet for alternative media)? Does it seek some kind of political or social change? Is it intended to generate a profit? A key difference between mainstream media and alternative media is that all of mainstream media is profit-oriented, while a number of alternative media houses are not profit oriented as a means to avoid conflict of interest in their objectivity.

These criteria are the most practical when seeking to determine whether a media house counts as alternative media or not. As a result, you will find alternative media is mostly polarized and appeals to a typically small subsection of the population, being less interested in what entertains or informs the majority of the population. Some alternative media publications are sensationalist in nature and are considered tabloids, while others are considered to be full of conspiracy theories. With the rise of the internet, however, many alternative media houses are becoming increasingly popular and slowly morphing into mainstream media houses themselves.

Examples of Alternative Media

Street Theatre Programmes for HIV/AIDs Awareness

ICT for Development Training NGOs in Bangladesh

Thailand Training NGOs

Historically, alternative media have been a crucial resource for social movements and marginalized groups in the United States. Revolutionary pamphleteers helped fan the flames of independence against the British. A vibrant abolitionist press kept alive the anti-slavery movement for decades preceding the Civil War. Similarly, a popular working class press was integral to the burgeoning labor movement in the first half of the twentieth century. In the early 1900s, the advertising-supported socialist newspaper The Appeal to Reason reached nearly a million subscribers and helped advance the socialist candidate Eugene Debs's presidential ambitions. During the nineteenth and twentieth century's, an ethnic press provided sustenance for various marginalized cultural groups. Likewise, an underground press helped sustain the civil rights movement and other activist groups during the 1960s.

More recently, the internet has complicated the binaries between alternative and mass media by lowering barriers to entry and enabling new network-based forms of media organizing. In the broader sense of "alternative media," this simply may mean a wider distribution for

nonmainstream political points of views, such as those found on Alternet or Commondreams.org. In other cases, the political opportunities amplified by the internet are far more radical and democratizing. A classic example of the latter can be found in Indymedia.org. Founded during the November 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, Indy media allows anyone with internet access to "be the media" by uploading news content (print, photos, audio or video) to the website. Operated according to anarchic and radical democratic principles such as consensus based decision-making, there are now as of January 2006 over 150 Indy media sites across six continents. With the explosion of the blogosphere, this kind of do it yourself (Idly) media is increasingly commonplace. Taken as a whole, this subgroup of alternative media has sometimes been referred to as "cyber activism" or simply "internet activism." Whereas Indy media is a radical leftwing organization, a conservative example is the grassroots conservative site, Free Republic. In the fall of 2004, the latter gained notoriety during the "Rather gate" affair by targeting a news story by Dan Rather that relied on unverified documents criticizing President George W. Bush's military service.

This brings us to an important question: What is the ideological dimension of alternative media? The ways in which alternative media challenge mainstream assumptions and rearrange social relationships often places them consciously or by default under the rubric of progressive politics. But conservatives clearly make alternative media too. Christian Right groups increasingly use the internet to organize constituents, as does fringe rightwing white supremacist groups. By some measures, politically conservative groups and individuals dominate the blogosphere in terms of numbers and impact.

How Do Mainstream and Alternative Media Audiences Differ?

Because of the nature of these two types of media, their audiences differ greatly. Most alternative media companies are much smaller than their mainstream counterparts. These outlets are also typically polarized in the content they produce. Some alternative media houses are geared toward polarized political views – some produce mostly liberal content, while others produce mostly conservative content. These media houses are also typically not linked with television but mostly distribute their content via newspapers, radio and the internet. The rise of the internet led to the explosion of alternative media, as it allows them to reach and expand an audience much more cheaply than MSM can.

Because of all these factors, alternative media audiences are typically small, segmented according to their views and perspectives, and mostly reside on the internet. They don't have to be polarized according to their political or social views, though this is the most common form of polarization, but they could also be segmented according to industry, such as engineering or medicine.

Mainstream media covers much larger audiences and has much greater funding. Think of the most well known news channels, such as Fox News, CNN and BBC, as well as websites like the New York Times and USA Today. The audiences of such media houses are typically more diverse, though they can still be polarized according to political views, and far more numerous than the audiences of alternative media houses.

One of the interesting distinctions between the two types of media is the ease with which they can be located online. Mainstream media sources are very easy to search, while alternative media outlets are

much harder to access. Supporters of alternative media are still faithful to their sources, however, since they do not trust mainstream media.

There is yet a third kind of audience that prefers to use both mainstream and alternative media for their benefit and so is partial to neither. This "middle ground audience" is smaller in number than mainstream media audiences, yet larger in number than alternative media audiences.

What Social Paradigms Are You Seeking to Promote?

Mainstream media houses will typically support the societal status quo, promoting societal norms through their content. Alternative media sources, on the other hand, will actively seek to challenge these norms through their content. If your business message appeals to those who consider themselves outsiders, then it will be best served when passed on via an alternative media house. If it aligns with traditional societal values, you should seek dissemination via a mainstream media house.

The Issue of Credibility

Mainstream media is considered to be a more credible news source than alternative media. This reputation has been slightly tainted by the rise of "fake news," but still holds for the most part. Your message may, therefore, be seen as more credible if taken up by the mainstream media. Alternative media still produces news, and some of it eventually gets picked up by the mainstream media if enough independent news sources run it. You can use this to your advantage by first running your story in alternative media sources and then sending links to a mainstream media house to prove that your message is newsworthy. They might eventually pick it up and boost it with the momentum it requires to reach a larger audience.

Street Theatre:

Theatre and India share a long relationship dating 5000 years ago. The earliest form of theatre was Sanskrit theatre. Bharata's 'Natya Shastra' was the one of the earliest play enacted in India. Indian theatre was heavily influenced by the people who ruled over the country. During the Islamic rule in the country, theatre was mostly forbidden throughout the nation. However, in the 15th and 16th century, Indian theatre was encouraged throughout the villages of the subcontinent to spread indigenous values and ideas. Indian Modern theatre, or historically, what can be clearly identified as the Western proscenium style of theatre, was not introduced in India before the late eighteenth century at the time of the consolidation of the British Empire in various parts of India. It was through the British that Western proscenium style theatre reached Indian shores. It was the amalgamation of the western and Indian culture that gave birth to Modern Indian Theatre forms. Many theatres and groups emerged in the major cities of the country like Mumbai, Kolkata etc. Theatre started to become a means of entertainment for people.

In India a paradigm shift from proscenium theatre to the theatre of the streets was initiated by the anti-fascist movement of communist party of India under the canopy of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). The root of street theatre in India was strongly related with the anti-fascist political ideology of the leftists and the progressive political theatre in the '40's in Kolkata. It evolved as a tool to emancipate the working class and reinforce revolution against the established power. But the question arises why theatres was performed in streets, not on stage? Performance artists with an interest in social activism chose to

stage their work on the street as a means of directly confronting or engaging the public. Other factors included reaching to the most people who cannot afford to buy a stage ticket for their entertainment. But the reason of origin of street theatre in India would be its utility as a political responsiveness for the poor mass. Street plays based on issues and stories directly concerned with the people such as hunger, famine, poetry, communal violence, feudal and colonial exploitation created impact on the society deeply divided by class, caste and religion through these common grave concerning issues.

Even after Independence, Indian Street theatre evolved as a means to voice the concerns of the common man. This theatre form immediately struck a chord with the masses. Street theatre is a situation where the audience has not come prepared to watch a play, and people may not have much time on hand. These limitations determine the parameters of the plays. They are short. The exchange is close, direct and intimate and, to be more effective, usually loud and larger than life. In order to draw crowds from all walks of life, the plays are humorous. Songs based on popular catchy tunes are included to add to the appeal. As Badal Sircar the noted playwright sums up, "the essential tool of the trade is the human body. The potentially of the human body, the ability to throw one's voice so that 4000 people can be reached without the aid of a mike, must be explored." Tracing the need for the development of

this form of communication which is sometimes referred to as the third theatre, Badal Sircar analyzed the two existing forms- the sophisticated urban theatre borrowed from the British and rooted in western culture and values and the traditional rural theatre. In spite of the tremendous popularity of folk theatre in rural areas, the ideas and values it dealt with remained backward, whereas the city theatre could propagate progressive ideas and values to a sophisticated audience which would be mentally stimulated at best but would not or could not act upon them." So, arose the need for a means of communication which would break barriers of stage and ticketed entries.

Street Plays or "NukkadNatak" were not just used as tools of political awareness but in their early days of popularity in the 80's, it was used for fighting social injustice as well. In 1980, the famous Mathura rape case instigated a lot of shows on the need to make the rape laws more stringent. Another famous street play of those days- "Om Swaha" dealt with demands for dowry resulting in harassment and sometimes death. There were several productions which give a short summary of the life of a woman in India and examine a woman's needs and abilities. By the early '90s street plays were used by several NGOs for spreading awareness in villages regarding issues such as HIV, social equality, injustice against women, ecological consciousness etc. Such was the popularity of the "NukkadNatak", that it has been even used by companies for marketing their products in India. Big players like the UN, Goonj, CRY etc. prefer this form for propagating their message to their target audience for its characteristic of being an audience magnet and being closely connected to them. There are thousands professional theatre groups in the country today which continue to use

"nukkadnatak" for social awareness. The strong culture of street play can be felt in the National capital of Delhi through the dramatics societies of the universities. Hundreds of competitions are organized throughout the year and almost every Delhi college has a "Nukkad" team each with a swelling will to amend the erroneous and build a better future.

From the famous theatre groups like "Asmita theatre group", which has hundreds of different productions to its name since its inception in 1993 to the story of Ms. NafisaLokhandwala, an International Development Management graduate from University of Nottingham who uses street plays to spread awareness about diseases in the remotest villages of Odisha, "NukkadNaatak" continues to be a participatory communication tool for social change. The voice of a street play artist is the voice of a rebellion. Street play is the spark that ignites numerous fires in the hearts, minds and souls of us Indians, the fire of voice, fire of initiation and the fire of change. However, as we move towards a more digitally connected world, "NukkadNaatak" needs to evolve as people are now more aware. The challenge is to convert this awareness into dialogue and possible action for change – Changes we wish for. Changes that make us blame the government for mishandling the affairs concerning our nation. It's all up in our head-right in our brain- the change. Changes in society does not mean only having enough capital

for putting up street lights for women's safety but it is about thinking or better, having the attitude of not adding to the problem and helping people mitigating the situation. Change in society comes with the change in the mindset of the people and street plays can rightly achieve that goal.

Folk Media:

The type of media which is usually used at the small cluster or local level to communicate with the society like folk choral, drum beating, native riddles, folk dancing, wall chalking, poetry of local saints and the local theaters which originate under the realm of folk media. Folk media is also known as the basic media or community media. It is the face to face communication procedure and it is very operative as the audience have the straight communication with the medium or the communicator.


Folk media is the inimitable in the nature, as it is look like the day-to-day life pattern of the rural masses. This type of media is a source of prevalent entertainment for the audience of rural areas, in addition to providing education and information to the people of the society. Countries like Pakistan, India, Bangladesh has a rich inheritance of folk art, folk tales, folk dance, classics, ballads and dramas that can be used for the development work in the society.

Folk art is a purposeful and unprompted form of art. Basic media is very beneficial to contract with the issues which is very sensitive for the

society like of health, where face to face communication might not be appropriate. The folk media is used as to reach the people in the process of change and development of the country. Folk media have a extraordinary impression on the rustic society because of their adequate idioms, purposeful significance and entertainment component. Countries like Pakistan and India who have more rural areas than urban and have low rate of literacy and have intense heritage of culture, in those places, Folk media can overcome the exertion of language, dialogue, words and other communication barriers like, understanding, clarification, curiosity, attitude and perception. In India with 35 per cent of the population is uneducated and with the media's reach principally constrained to urban areas-information, education and entertainment do not grasp a great majority of the people of the society.

The Indian society is considered by a multifaceted social system with dissimilar caste, dogmas, and the communities. The rate of illiteracy and poverty in the Indian society auxiliary to the scantiness of the mass media to stretch almost 700 million people who reside in village. To those people, the mass media is demonstrated to be glitzy, objective and implausible in the contrast with the conversant recital of traditional artist with whom the people of that particular area could not only understand and hear but even touch passionately. Back in the struggle times of India these execution arts have frolicked a vigorous role in dispersion the essence of freedom movement. Many plays, street theatre took place and it helped in the revolution also.
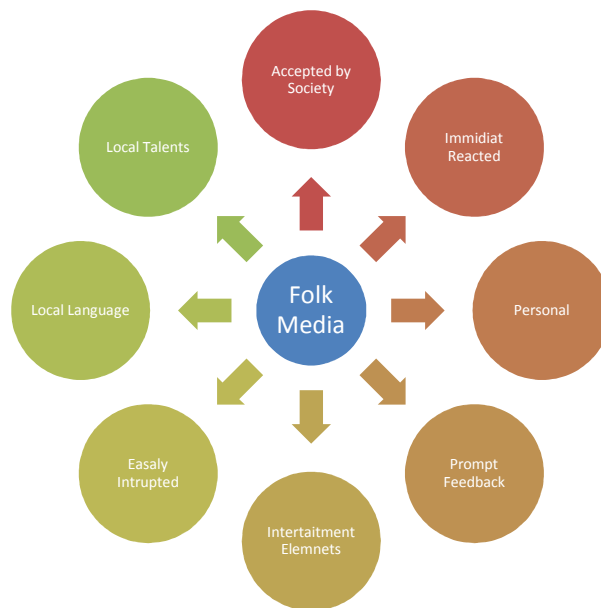
Advantages of folk media:

- ➢ Available and enjoyed by all age group people
- ➢ Provides immense flexibility
- ➢ Preserve and disseminate in a lively manner, the tradition and culture of our forefathers. ⌉
- ➢ Satisfies man's need for moral instruction combined with entertainment.
- ➢ Satisfy the innate desire for self expression
- ➢ High Interest arousal capacity
- ➢ Available at a low cost
- ➢ Highly impactful
- ➢ High audience participation
- ➢ The folk media help – In a face to face communication ,clarification of doubts is possible.
- ➢ Barriers to communication almost nonexistent.
- ➢ Rapport is immediate and direct
- ➢ Familiar format ,content and colloquial dialects brings about clarity in communication

➢ Highly personal and intimate appeal. very close to the hearts and minds of the people owing to it's origin to traditional beliefs , attitudes and values

➢ Increased credibility and familiarity

Folk Song:

Music appeals to the physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual instincts of man. In all spheres of life music is absolutely essential.Music is remembered more faithfully because to the folk singer the whole meaning of the song is emotional rather than logical.In tribal societies or societies other than urbanities,Folk music plays a main role in daily life.Most of the activities of the members of these societies revolve round the rituals and festivities associated with their traditional music.

Folk musical styles supplement the speech communication with patterned vocal sounds,i.e., musical styles of modes.The folk music and folk songs go hand in hand which functions as a communication device when it is employed through the language and accepted melodic patterns of a community.Apart from entertainment, Folk songs are sung to teach the child to walk, eat, play, be industrious and good natured. The rural child receives home education through folk songs, which are unforgettable and everlasting.

Folk music and folk songs constitute a major part of the folk media. The folk tones, tunes, rhythms in India are some of the finest constituents of the artistic expression of the folk life and people. The playing of various folk instruments are age old practices. The playing of folk musical instruments has created the tracks and genres of folk music in India. The varieties and the studies of the folk instruments have created the plethora of Indian folk music and folk songs which are communicating Indian masses down the ages.

Folk music includes the tribal as well as the non tribal music traditions which showcase the diversity of cultural heritage of India. Folk music is learned in a quite natural and spontaneous way by people. While these are performed in the society and one gets it from the very childhood, the folk music simply enters into the framework of mind and feelings. The community activities where folk instruments are played and folk music are performed and such activities like festivals, rituals, occasions etc. are part of social life.

In the occasions like birth and death, marriage, harvesting, plantations, celebrations to give social education etc. folk music and songs are used in a traditional society. In case of folk music and songs, the instrument players are themselves the manufacturers of the instruments they play. The construction materials of the folk instruments are locally available materials like bamboo, cane, wood, animal skin, earthen pot, coconut shell, cucumber shell etc.

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Folk musical styles supplement the speech communication with patterned vocal sounds, i.e. musical styles of modes. "Like the forms of Language" Alain Danielon writes, "the musical modes are permanent marks of the tradition to which people belong"."(Sreekumar). Andelu is the traditionally made ring bells which are accompanied in performing Burra Katha. Burakatha vina is another instrument played while performing Burra Katha. Bansuri, venu which is the flute, in Indian faith is the instrument played by Lord Krishna, the embodiment of Indian culture. Particular variety of Bansuri is used in classical music.

In folk music in different regions of India Bansuri of different types and variety are commonly used which have different names like bansi, sifung, bahi, bansuri, muruli, venu etc. Different patterns of dhol or dholak i.e. drums are the popular folk musical instruments producing varieties of folk rhythms. The rhythm of folk life, merriment, ceremonies, festivities, occasions are given life by the rhythms of different drums in Indian society and culture. Dholak is used in devotional music like bhajan, qawwali, kirtan, shabad and in other songs and secular folk songs. Nal is the important drum for the performance of tamasha in Maharashtra. Dholki is the folk drum and a smaller version of Dholak. Goga dhol is used by Muria community in Madhya Pradesh.

Gummeta used in Bura Katha in Andhra Pradesh, tumbak in Kashmir, phara in Kerala, pung in Manipur, tamak among the Santhals, katho in Maharashtra, khamak in Bengal, khol in Assam, Manipur etc., mridong, maddal, pung,nagada, gummeta in Andhra Pradesh are some of the folk drums in India. Charchari among the Munda and Santhals, chenda in Kerala played with Kathakali, chende in Karnataka played with Yaksha Gana, dhak in Gujarat, dhol in north India and in the north east

India, bihu dhol in Assam, bhangra dhol in Punjab, dholak in north India are some of the folk drums prominent in India.

Folk fiddle like chikara, chikari in northern India, produces folk melodies. Daf, dapphu, daffali are the tambourine which had the origin in Middle Eastern nations. Damaru, which is believed to be used by Lord Shiva, is popular among the wandering Hindu Sadhus and the instrument is frequently used for religious and secular purposes. Similar is the instrument dhad, used in Sikh rituals and by the Sikh minstrels. In South India Idakka and udaku are the instruments having similarity with damaru. Folk string instruments has varieties across the country which are used in different songs. Dramyen in the Tibetan culture and the Tungana in Nepali culture are the string instruments in the Himalayan region. Ektar, dotar, gopichand in Bengal, dotara, tokari in Assam, rabab in north India, tumbi in Punjab, santur in Kashmir are some of the string instruments.

Dotara is a popular accompaniment for the bauls or bairagees i.e. wandering minstrels and such instruments are institutionalized by professional folk song performers. There are the folk instruments produing jingle bells like sounds. These include chimpta in Punjab, ghungharu used in dancing, tuntuna used in western India. Earthen made folk instrument ghatam in south India get the classical status. Nout in Kashmir has similarity with the ghatam. Folk instruments have

much regional varieties. E.g. Kartal in Manipur has its regional specificity. Different types of cymbals like manjira, kafi, mondira, tala are popularly used in folk music. Vocal pipe instruments like ottu in South India, nadaswaram, pungi have the richness of musical appeal. Lute played with bow like pena in Manipur, ravanhasta in Gujarata, Rajasthan, ubo in Nagaland, kenda in north India, bina in Assam are some other important folk musical instruments in India.

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