Understanding the Function of Folk Media as Popular Culture During the Indian Liberation Fight

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Abstract

Folk media refers to traditional means of information and message dissemination through demonstration of native songs, dance, plays, stories, myths or symbols in a visually appealing and entertaining manner performed in front of local audience aware of the context and the background of performance art. The outreach of modern media was severely limited in pre-independence era with limited and exclusive access to print and electronic media. However, the folk media was ingrained deep into the local culture like a bestowed legacy passed from one generation to next. Local plays (Natak Mandali) were a hot-spot for deliberation and diffusion of ideologies popularising need for armed-struggle or subtle non-cooperation. Songs of valour and courage were sung and dramatised on stage in a hope that people develop resistance and defiance against the ruling monarch. Bahurupiya (Master of disguise) was one of the most ancient folk media practice prevalent during British era and is even practiced in modern times. They (Bahuripyas) were skilled in art of mimicry and imitation and this practice was used by the legendry freedom fighter Azaad. His comrade Bhagat Singh was known to mobilise people through stage and role plays where the bravery of native warriors was praised and celebrated through patriotic poetry and songs. Gandhi took a local folk symbol Charkha and established it as epitome of boycott and non- cooperation and a beacon of self-reliance in an attempt to reduce the country's economic burden. Historical evidences suggest that such events were quite popular means to mingle with people and prepare them to revolt or disturb the ruling regime. It also helped in development of new materials of resistance through a sort of cascading effect. This study makes an attempt, through extensive literature survey and anecdotal evidence, to investigate the role of folk media during freedom struggle with particular focus on plays/drama, bhajan/kirtan and native symbols centred on the Bengal province (Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal) and how it helped in restoring the native pride and eventually preparing them to stand up and fight and against the English.

Keywords: freedom struggle, media, press, folk song, folk dance, folk media

I. Introduction

An important part of the complex fabric of Indian culture is played by folk media. Folk media includes a wide range of cultural manifestations that are rooted in long-standing traditions and conventions, such as folk music, dances, dramas, and storytelling. The values, beliefs, and heritage of various Indian cultures are powerfully preserved and transmitted through this traditional style of communication. Folk media unites people from all origins and fosters a feeling of communal identity, acting as a catalyst for

social cohesion. It ensures the continuity of cultural information by acting as a medium for teaching newer generations about historical events, moral lessons, and cultural norms. Folk media also offers a forum for underrepresented voices to be heard, addressing social issues and starting discussions about gender, caste, and inequality. It showcases the colourful diversity of India's regional cultures and strengthens the bonds within communities, fostering a sense of pride and belonging. Overall, folk media occupies an integral place in the Indian way of life, connecting people to their roots and serving as a dynamic expression of cultural identity. Every campaign requires an effective communication. Every government needs a suitable platform to held presentations and discussions on matters of national or international importance. In modern times countries and communities have access to plethora of medium through which propaganda can be spread and thoroughly diffused even to the seemingly lower hierarchy of social order, but this was not the case in colonial India. Media was strictly regulated and monitored by the British government. In the next paragraph, I review the case of conventional media- print and electronic and their availability during British era.

II. Media in British India
A. Newspaper and vernaculars

Before we begin discussion on the presence of media in British India, let's review their presence and penetration in pre-British India so as we have had an idea of how the ground-work was laid before the white-man began to take burden of uncouth. Numerous written records from the Gupta era and succeeding dynasties have been discovered in vernacular languages such Sanskrit, Pali, Kharosthi, etc. The Mughal Empire arrived in India and quickly established itself, resulting in the emergence of a new type of press. The beginning of a well-organized communication took the form of a written newspaper. After gathering information from various regions of the nation, the handwritten newspapers were distributed. The writers of the newspapers were granted freedom. Sometimes the authors provided inaccurate information, whether on purpose or accidentally. The development of the press was evident during Akbar's reign when he set up an effective communication office and maintained records, which gave mediaeval Indian historians a platform to gather a wealth of information for their historical writing.

The beginning of modern media culture in India started with the publishing of 'Bengal Gazzette' by an Irishman, James Augustus Hicky [1] in the year 1780. It was followed by more newspapers like The India, The Calcutta Gazette, The Madras Gazette, The Bombay Herald etc. After the freedom struggle of 1857 more vernaculars which were in local languages began to flourish. However, there were reporting delays in want of transportation and communication. In 1858, the Indigo Movement by Bengal farmers was reported by large number of vernaculars and it was when censorship truly started in India. By the year 1910, British government started regulating the publishing of sensitive news [2]. However articles with nationalist tone kept on appearing furthering the disappointment of British.

During British India, several newspapers played significant roles in shaping public opinion and disseminating news and information. Here are some notable newspapers from that period:

1. The Statesman: Founded in 1875 in Kolkata, The Statesman is one of India's oldest English-language newspapers. It was known for its objective reporting and played a crucial role in the Indian independence movement.

2. The Hindu: Established in 1878 in Chennai, The Hindu became an influential newspaper in British India. It upheld high journalistic standards and provided a platform for nationalist voices during the freedom struggle.

3. The Times of India: Founded in 1838, The Times of India (TOI) is one of the oldest and most widely circulated English-language newspapers in India. It started as a bi-weekly edition and expanded over the years to become a major media outlet.

4. The Bombay Chronicle: Established in 1913, The Bombay Chronicle was known for its critical stance towards British colonial policies. It covered various socio-political issues and played a significant role in anti-colonial movements.

5. Amrita Bazar Patrika: Founded in 1868, Amrita Bazar Patrika was a leading Bengali-language newspaper during the British Raj. It advocated for social reform, criticized colonial policies, and supported nationalist causes.

6. The Pioneer: Established in 1865 in Allahabad, The Pioneer was an influential English-language newspaper. It actively covered political events, social issues, and played a crucial role in shaping public opinion.

7. The Madras Mail: Founded in 1868, The Madras Mail was an important English-language newspaper in South India. It covered local and national news and provided a platform for Indian voices during the freedom struggle.

These are just a few examples of prominent newspapers during British India. There were several other regional and local newspapers that contributed to the dissemination of news and the growth of the press as a significant medium of communication during that era.

Newspapers played a significant role in British India, serving as powerful tools for disseminating information, shaping public opinion, and fostering socio-political changes. During this period, newspapers became an essential medium for the exchange of ideas, promoting nationalism, and advocating for social reform. They provided a platform for intellectuals, activists, and leaders to voice their concerns and aspirations, challenging the British colonial rule and advocating for independence. Newspapers like The Hindu, The Statesman, and The Indian Mirror emerged as influential publications, providing a voice for Indians and addressing issues such as education, women's rights, and civil liberties. They also served as a medium for connecting different regions and communities, fostering a sense of unity among diverse populations across the subcontinent. Through their extensive coverage and critical analysis, newspapers played a crucial role in mobilizing public opinion, shaping political movements, and ultimately laying the groundwork for India's struggle for independence.

B. Radio

Radio was another tool of media and communication which was introduced under the British rule. The first broadcasting started in 1920s [3] and the radio transmission was heavily regulated by British until amateur radio operators came into the picture when they started broadcasting contents with nationalist fervour. Radio played a significant role in British India, serving as a powerful tool for communication, information dissemination, and political influence. Introduced in the early 1920s, radio broadcasting quickly gained popularity and became an integral part of daily life in the region. The British colonial government recognized the potential of radio as a medium to control and shape public opinion. They established the All India Radio (AIR), which initially focused on broadcasting news, entertainment, and cultural programs. The radio became a means of disseminating the British government's policies and

ideas, promoting their vision of a modern and unified India under British rule. Additionally, it served as a platform to promote British culture, music, and literature, fostering a sense of loyalty towards the colonial administration. However, radio also became a source of inspiration and resistance for the Indian independence movement. Activists and leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi effectively used radio speeches to reach a vast audience and rally support for the struggle against British rule. Thus, while radio in British India initially served as a tool of colonial control, it also became a means of mobilization and resistance, contributing to the eventual independence of India. During this time, it became a potent tool for information transmission, mobilisation, and communication. Here are some essential facets of radio's contribution to the struggle for freedom:

1. Alternative Voice: Radio gave nationalists and freedom fighters a different forum on which to express their ideas and reach a large audience. They were able to communicate with people outside of the print media, which the colonial rulers frequently censored.

2. Mobilisation and Unity: The people of British India were greatly united and the masses were mobilised thanks in large part to radio broadcasts. It assisted in organising protests, gaining public support for the liberation cause, and raising awareness about the various campaigns and movements initiated by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose.

3. Combating Colonial Propaganda: Radio was an effective medium for presenting the nationalist viewpoint and battling British propaganda. It gave independence fighters the chance to refute the colonial story and provide their own account of what happened, instilling in the populace a sense of nationalism and resistance.

4. Voice of Freedom: During the freedom struggle, numerous underground radio stations were established, broadcasting pro-freedom messages and inspiring opposition to British control. These covert radio stations continued to broadcast despite the dangers they posed and were essential to stoking the flame of independence.

5. Speeches by Nationalist Leaders Were Broadcast on Radio: Speeches by nationalist leaders and liberation fighters were broadcast on radio. This made it possible for a larger audience to hear what they had to say, which encouraged and inspired others to join the fight for independence.

6. Bringing Together Disparate Regions: Radio served as a bridge, bringing together diverse British India regions. People from various language, cultural, and geographic origins were able to feel more united as a result, which strengthened the foundation of the liberation movement.

7. Providing News and Information: During the war for freedom, radio was a crucial source of news and information. It offered updates on the most recent freedom movement advances as well as news about demonstrations, arrests, and other significant occasions. This made it easier to keep the public informed and involved in the conflict.

Radio served as a vital communication, mobilisation, unification, and resistance against colonial control tool during British India's war for independence. It assisted in influencing public opinion, raising awareness, and maintaining the flame of defiance ignited in the general psyche of public.

III. Folk tradition in British India

India is a vibrant country and has been known to retain its charm since antiquity. Also her richness lies in varied cultural legacies. British weighed heavily with white man's burden to educate and appropriate a so-called uncivilized country. However the rich mix of colour and celebration has always been deeply entrenched in intricately woven and layered Indian society. Even more so during the time English ruled

over India. British India was a multicultural country with a wide range of cultural customs. There were numerous indigenous civilizations, religions, and folk traditions present on the subcontinent, each with its own unique practises and beliefs. Eastern India's Bengal and other regions were home to the travelling minstrels and mystics known as the Bauls. They incorporated aspects of Hinduism, Islam, and Sufism into their music and poetry to reflect their spiritual views. The Bauls performed songs about devotion, love, and looking for the holy. Bhangra is a vibrant folk dance and music genre that has its roots in the Punjab region. It has animated motions, colourful attire, and the sound of a traditional drum called a dhol. Kathak Dance was another folk tradition which epitomized the quintessential vibrant and colourful India. Although it has its roots in North India, the traditional dance style also developed a sizable following in British India. It incorporates storytelling, beautiful movements, rhythmic footwork, and expressive facial expressions. Kathak dancers frequently gave performances at temples and courts. The Santhal tribe, which is predominantly found in eastern India, has a unique dancing culture. The usage of indigenous musical instruments like the banam (a stringed instrument) and tamak (a percussion instrument) and rhythmic footwork are characteristics of Santhal dances. These traditional dances, garba and dandiya, have their roots in Gujarat, in western India. During the nine-night Navratri festival, the dance called garba is performed, with circular forms and beautiful hand motions. Dancers utilise sticks (dandiyas) to perform elaborate movements in the vibrant dance style known as dandiya.

Before I begin writing on the main theme, let's review the different folk practices that were prevalent in British India and how those were geographically distributed. Here are a few illustrations of folk customs that were prevalent in British India:

A. Folk songs

Cecil Sharp, a famous English folk song collector, musician and composer defines folk songs as "the spontaneous music of the unspoiled, unlettered classes and created out of their pure natural instinct" [4] Folk songs in India are one of the oldest and still in practice. During British India, folk songs underwent a radical change and songs with patriotic and defiant flavour began to be written and performed all over the India [5]

• Raamcharitmanas is an ancient Hindu text written by sage Tulsi Das. It retells the life and philosophy of Lord Rama, the great Hindu deity and is recited in Northern India with utmost devotion and is closely related with their way of lifestyle and thinking. [6]. It celebrates the judicious choice of good over evil; right over wrong; light over darkness and also mentions human value of universal nature that has been cherished and preserved by Hindu philosophy throughout the centuries [7].It had been used as a radical text around Gangetic plane during British era [8] to keep the fire of religious identity burning. Social and political biases in India are closely related to the individual's religious preferences. This was known to the sages, devotees, pandits and pujaris (custodians of Hindu temple) and has been extensively used to uplift the moral of people during the humiliating period of colonialism. The regional customs, fashions, and languages were taken into consideration when performing the Ramcharitmanas musically in British India. Based on regional tastes, there were variances in the tunes, instruments employed, and the overall presentation. Classical Indian music, folk music, and regional musical customs were all blended into the performance of Ramcharitmanas.

The English-language publication of numerous Ramcharitmanas translations and interpretations was also influenced by the British administration's interest in Indian literature and culture. The epic poem

was popularised outside of the original Indian context thanks to the efforts of several British scholars and translators to comprehend and convey the text to a larger audience. Overall, the Ramcharitmanas rendition remained essential despite British colonial rule.

- Bhajan/Kirtan are religious devotional songs that Hindu and Sikh followers utilise during liturgical and private worship to help them think, feel, and act in ways that are consistent with their traditions' conceptions of transcendent truth [9]. British were uninterested in Indian music, especially Bhajans and Kirtans since they included intricate stories and required background knowledge to understand the lyrics. Local musicians were discouraged and only a handful of them found patronage under local rulers. However, many rulers came forward and promoted it through organising events and funding the development of the field. Maharaja Pratap Singh of Jaipur started the practice of holding conference of musicians. This exercise eventually culminated into the production of Sangit Sagar, [10] a monumental work on Indian Music, and was used to uplift the religious moral of the society and made people associated with their roots. Contents of Bhajan and Kirtan covered familiar religious themes. These were performed under a closely knitted group which were stakeholders in native affairs and many a times these gatherings culminated into socio-political discussion group. Discontent and disappointments were openly discussed and slowly the sympathy for British began to deteriorate. Cause of freedom fighters got a boost and it only helped in the national cause.

- Quawwally is Muslim devotional song and it is sometimes also referred as Sufi songs [10]. These were folk songs performed by Muslim artists and those were many a times written on social and political issues in an entertaining way to uplift the mood of people [11].
It is performed by a group of quawwals and is led by two solo singers. It presents mystical poetry with themes like love for God or beloved or country characterised by repetition and improvisation. Drum beats is accompanied by hand clapping and reinforced with melodious tune of harmonium. Beauty of the performance lies in the vigorous participation of the performers. Public gathering becomes conducive to social debate and nationalists took advantage of that for spreading their propaganda against the British. All these interactions were strictly on one-to-one basis and that helped in establishing a repertoire with the general mass.

- Dhandhar were folk songs with lively performance and well synchronization of voice of the singers and rhythm of instruments. These were having content related to religious theme. Eminent local personalities were also the theme of these songs [12]. Dhandhar folk songs were influenced by many different genres during the British colonial era in India. The Indian state of Rajasthan is where the traditional folk music genre known as "Dhandhar" first appeared. It is distinguished by bouncy rhythms, catchy tunes, and lyrics that portray the way of life, customs, and cultural elements of the area. The cultural environment of India, particularly its music, was greatly influenced by British administration. Western musical styles were introduced by the British government, and this had some influence on how Dhandhar folk songs were performed. Folk songs were among the indigenous music genres that British colonial officers, academics, and musicians were frequently interested in researching and documenting. It's also important to note that some cross-cultural cooperation and adaptations emerged throughout the colonial era. Some Indian composers and performers who were

influenced by Western music tried fusing Indian and Western musical components. The traditional performance of Dhandhar folk songs, which would have been more anchored in their indigenous form, is less likely to have been significantly impacted by such changes. Overall, performances of Dhandhar folk songs during the British rule in India would have mostly adhered to their original forms, with influences mostly coming from British researchers and scholars who recorded and studied the music.

B. Folk dance

India is diverse and rich. A variety of folk dances with regional significance and meaning are performed all over the nation. India can be proud of its countless dances, each of which is a speciality of a specific area or group of people. Dance is a type of rhythmic physical movement that occurs naturally in both humans and animals. Dances performed by hunters, tribes, and agricultural groups provide as historical records of human development over time. The understanding of the human body movement as a means of expressing joy and grief is evident from almost every civilizations or cultures. In Britannica Encyclopaedia, Folk Dance has been defined as the genuine traditional dance of a particular civilization, passed down orally from parent to child in accordance with all conventions, traditions, beliefs, superstitions, and folkways without modification. The most organic and unplanned way to communicate joy and a sense of celebration of life is through folk dance. Folk dance is basic, instinctive, and vivacious in nature and permits abandonment and freedom of expression to a significant extent [13].

Folk dancing was created for the people's pure enjoyment. Folk dances are considerably more significant because they are a pure manifestation of Indian culture. The artistic movements and postures of Indian folk dances are works of creativity, which are supported by the pulsating rhythm of vocal or instrumental music. Indian theatre has its roots in the countryside. Many people think it is a complete art form because it incorporates acting, actual music, dance, movement, and discourse. In a folk play, the audience frequently takes part. The roots of folk performance are found in ancient rites and rituals. They are closely tied to the way of life of the village or tribal society.

Tamasha is principally a folk tradition emanating from Maharashtra during late sixteenth and seventeenth century [14]. It served as a bawdy, lascivious entertainment for the armies of both Mughal and Maratha chieftains of the Deccan plain. It was a great moral booster for the fighters who gave the British nightmares. Tamasha folk dance is a vibrant and energetic traditional dance form that originates from the state of Maharashtra in India. It is known for its lively and captivating performances, which combine elements of dance, music, and theatre. Tamasha is characterized by its spirited movements, rhythmic footwork, and expressive gestures, creating a visual spectacle for the audience. The dancers, often accompanied by traditional musical instruments like dholki and harmonium, enact narratives from mythological stories, historical events, or everyday life through their performances. The colourful costumes and elaborate makeup of the dancers add to the overall visual appeal of Tamasha folk dance. It serves as a source of entertainment and cultural expression, showcasing the rich heritage and traditions of Maharashtra.

Bahurupiya dance was rich in colour and loud in performance. The stage was set to astonish and surprise the audience. The performers changed appearances and voices too often and left the audience

spell-bound. A dynamic and alluring traditional dance style from West Bengal, India, is called bahurupiya folk dance. It is a distinctive style of performance art that incorporates dance, music, and storytelling. The name "Bahurupiya" means "one who takes on many forms," and the dancers truly live up to this name by donning a variety of bright and ornate costumes, masks, and props to portray numerous personalities. The dance is distinguished by its animated gestures, refined footwork, and rhythmic movements, all of which are accompanied by chants and traditional folk music. The performers expertly imitate the characteristics and behaviours of animals, gods, goddesses, famous people from history, and regular people, drawing the audience into a fantastical realm. Folk dancing form Bahurupiya is more than just entertainment. These dance forms were infused with local folklores and chances are that it might as well have inspired the legendary freedom fighter Chandra Shekhar Azaad. Azad was a master of disguise and the British police had had hard time locating him. He always seemed to be a step ahead [15] and this led to demoralisation of British police. Azad's exploit gave a boost to the cause of freedom.

C. Folk theatre

Folk theatre commonly referred to as traditional or popular theatre is a dynamic branch of the performing arts that has its roots in the cultural traditions of many different communities all over the world. It covers a wide range of dramatic manifestations that are representative of regional or societal norms, values, and beliefs. Folk theatre frequently combines music, dance, storytelling, and brightly coloured costumes to produce engrossing performances that delight spectators. Local communities are actively involved in this type of theatre, and local people are used as actors and performers. It acts as a conduit for the transmission of ancestor knowledge, the preservation of cultural traditions, and the promotion of a sense of identity and community among the populace.

During that time, folk theatre played a crucial role in the rich cultural diversity of British India. It covered a diverse range of local performing customs, each with its own unique techniques, narratives, and influences. Folk theatre functioned as a method of amusement, education, and social criticism, from the lively and animated Yakshagana of Karnataka to the energetic Jatra of Bengal. Open-air settings were frequently used for performances, drawing spectators from all social classes. These traditional theatre genres depicted mythological stories, historical events, and current issues while using music, dance, conversation, and extravagant costumes. The performers, who frequently come from less affluent families, brought their creativity and passion to the stage and enthralled the audience with their skills and prowess. Folk theatre was used to stir the nationalist conscience of the society through role plays and stage-show on contemporary issues. It was a way for regional cultural expression leading to rediscovery and re-evaluation of indigenous form of literature and performing arts [16]

According to Reddy et al. in their seminal study, "In 1923, Singh joined the National College in Lahore, where he was also involved in extracurricular activities like the dramatics society," Bhagat Singh inspired the students with live theatre performances at Lahore National College [17][18]. Folk theatre has the capacity to inspire the populace and raise awareness of the necessity for independence, according to Bhagat Singh. He actively organised and took part in theatre shows and street plays that portrayed the evils of British rule and urged cohesion in the fight for freedom. Bhagat Singh efficiently spread his revolutionary views by participating in folk theatre, which had a long-lasting influence on the nationalist cause in India and motivated countless others to join the struggle for independence. His contributions to

the British Indian folk theatre tradition are still appreciated and honoured as proof of the ability of art to affect societal change.

D. Folk symbol

Folk symbols are like geographical indicators (GIs) and local do immense pride in these symbols. A folk symbol is a visual representation that holds deep cultural significance and is rooted in the traditions and beliefs of a particular community or society. These symbols often emerge from the collective imagination and experiences of a group, embodying their values, customs, and folklore. Folk symbols can take various forms, such as animals, plants, objects, or abstract designs, each carrying its own unique meaning. They serve as a means of communication, connecting people to their heritage and acting as a visual language that transcends words. Whether it's the Celtic knot [19] representing eternity and interconnectedness, the Hamsa hand [20] warding off evil in Middle Eastern cultures, or the dream catcher [21] symbolizing protection and filtering of dreams in Native American traditions, folk symbols have the power to evoke a sense of identity, spirituality, and unity among those who cherish and uphold their significance.

There were many distinct symbols used in British India to represent various aspects of traditional culture. The "Om" symbol, which is revered in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, was one notable emblem. In Indian traditions, it is frequently employed as a spiritual icon and symbolises the holy voice. The peacock is yet another image frequently connected to folk culture in British India. India's national bird, the peacock, has deep cultural and religious significance. It is frequently portrayed as a symbol of beauty, grace, and spirituality in folk art, textiles, and jewellery.

In addition, many regional emblems were used frequently in British India to symbolise the variety of folk cultures found in various regions and groups. The Bengali folk emblem "Shankha" (conch shell), for instance, stands for purity and is associated with rituals and religious ceremonies in Bengal. India is country that loves and respects its legends and mythologies and some symbols are entrenched deep in natives psyche and intelligent leaders understood the power of symbols, like the unstoppable force of Gandhi's Charkha (spinning wheel to yarn clothe). Charkha symbolised non-materialism at its height and added a spiritual aspect to the whole movement [22][23].

IV FOLK MEDIA AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Regulating Folk media would be a logistic nightmare for the British. Folk media played a crucial role in shaping public awareness during the era of British India. With its rich diversity and cultural heritage, India was home to various forms of folk media, including folk songs, folk dances, street plays, and storytelling. These forms of communication were deeply rooted in local traditions and languages, allowing them to effectively reach and resonate with the masses.

Folk media served as a powerful tool to raise public awareness about various social, political, and economic issues prevalent under British rule. Folk songs, known as "Bhajans" or "Kirtans," were used to convey messages of unity, resistance, and patriotism. These songs often contained hidden meanings and metaphors, allowing people to express their grievances and aspirations in a symbolic manner. They instilled a sense of pride in Indian culture, history, and heritage, fostering a spirit of nationalism and unity among the masses.

Similarly, folk dances and street plays became popular mediums for disseminating messages of social reform, highlighting the injustices faced by various sections of society. Through colourful costumes, energetic movements, and engaging performances, these art forms conveyed powerful narratives that challenged the prevailing societal norms and sought to bring about positive change. They addressed issues such as caste discrimination, gender inequality, and poverty, stirring the emotions of the audience and motivating them to take action.

Storytelling, another prominent form of folk media, captivated both young and old alike. Folk tales and legends were used to convey moral lessons, cultural values, and historical anecdotes. These stories often incorporated subtle criticisms of the British regime, fostering a sense of resilience and resistance among the listeners. They served as a means to preserve and propagate Indian traditions and customs, strengthening the collective identity of the people.

In conclusion, folk media in British India played a pivotal role in raising public awareness and shaping public opinion. It served as a powerful medium for expressing dissent, instilling a sense of national pride, and promoting social reform. Through its diverse forms, folk media united the masses, empowered them, and paved the way for the eventual independence of India. Eventually it led to more and more people being educated about the evil policies of British government which would eventually lead to growing discontent which is reflected strongly in the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement. It can safely be assumed that folk media led to elevated public awareness regarding the call for democracy and prospect of freedom [23]. Following can be the reasons, although not exhaustive or limited to, for folk media being so instrumental in reading and, in turn, affecting the mood of public in favour of the nationalist movement:

- Folk media was familiar to the audience. They associated with the context; the language and performers were familiar- this gave a feeling of approval and validation of their pain and grief. Here the contextual and linguistic awareness gave impetus to behavioural psychology.
- The interest, mood, perception, understanding, interpretation and attitude were all native, so the diffusion of information was deeper and durable.
- Those satisfied the innate need of locals for self- expression. The presentations were dramatic and lyrical and aided in the charm.
- Folk media played a significant role in educating the rural people about the effects of social evils like alcoholism, illiteracy, untouchability, superstition, communalism, population explosion, malnutrition and in-sanitation, dowry, sati, and so on in rural areas, where the majority of the population lives in villages.

Conclusion

Information dissemination is a complex process and different variables are at play, linguistic considerations; perception differences; behavioural psychology; identity complexities and many more. Mainstream media in contemporary world is at advantage when we take into consideration the plethora of means and medium; however, that was a tough job when world was not acquainted with gazettes and internet. British era India was one such place where news would be harder to spread provided the limitations of access. Folk media would come as saviour owing to its ease of accessibility. It helped in building a positive sentiment towards the nationalist cause and helped in freedom struggle movement would not be a hyperbole to make, per se. However, the immense contribution of folk media wasn't just

limited pre-independence, rather its usefulness and relevance has permeated the flow of time and modern government relies on it popularity for campaigning on different social issues.

Acknowledgment

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