Grassroots Renaissance: The Increasing Importance of Folk Media in Third World Nations*

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An old media form in new settings has caught on in the 1970s in Third World communications. The use of traditional or folk media to aid recent national development programs seems to be upstaging the paradigms of the 1960s that emphasized bigness in mass media development, non-participatory, uni-directional information imbalance (one-way flow of information from urban centers to rural areas or from foreign nations to Third World cultures), and that played up development in terms of economics at the expense of peoples' values, beliefs, attitudes and the societal needs.

It is becoming apparent that mass media such as newspapers, broadcasting and film in their present form cannot adequately perform the development roles expected of them, mainly because they do not reach enough of the Third World population with credible and relevant information. The result has been that media "experts," both local and expatriate, have discovered in this decade what the peasants have known for centuries—the valuable contributions that grassroots media are capable of making.

This paper will discuss the use of folk media, either in their traditional rural settings or when adapted to mass media, to bring about social awareness of national development plans. It will also look at the role of interpersonal communications networks.

Characteristics of Folk Media

The debate on positive and negative characteristics of folk media

* Paper presented at International Seminar on Folk Culture, Institute of Oriental and Orissan Studies, Cuttack, Orissa, India, December 19–23, 1978.

necessary to bring about change rages on. The most important question —Can traditional media carry modern messages, and if they can, should they; if they cannot, should they be modified so that they can?—will not be satisfactorily answered until more research is completed on what the rural people themselves think about this. Those who have studied folk potentialities have varying answers.

Ranganath, for example, described folk media as being intimate with the masses, rich in variety, readily available at low cost, relished by different age groups and by both sexes, theme carriers traditionally and having greater potential for persuasive communication, face-to-face communication and instant feedback.[1] He believes some folk media can carry modern messages effectively. A compatriot seems to agree, stressing these traits of traditional media for bringing about social change in developing nations:

> These media are comparatively cheap. They do not have to be imported and, therefore, involve no foreign exchange, a scarce commodity except for oil kingdoms. They belong to the community and not to individuals, state or private/public industry. Many of the developmental efforts, anyway, have to be aimed at the community as a whole rather than at atomised individuals if behavioural change is to occur. . . . There is no threat of cultural colonialism and foreign ideological domination. Also, local talent and localised message would have more credibility than those centralised ones emanating now from state capitals. . . . Folk media are egalitarian. They may prove a better outlet for egalitarian messages than the present elite press, film or radio-TV. There is a commonality about them. Acceptability, cultural relevance, entertainment value, localised language, legitimacy, flexibility, message repetitionability, instant two-way communication, etc. are among their virtues. Folk forms may be better carriers of the 'total' message—welfare of the whole society in the many-sidedness of cultural, economic and social development—for up-lifting the quality of rural life in its entirety rather than bifurcated and narrow message beams such as those of family planning.[2]

Dissanayake, listing advantages folk media have over mass media in social development in poorer countries, said that first of all, traditional media are more credible, " having existed among the rural folk for a long time, express(ing) their deeply felt and communal joys and sorrows, triumph and defeat." Second, the peasants consider mass media to be elitist and alien and identified with centers of power. Dissanayake added that traditional media employ the idiom of the people and the symbols which are readily intelligible to them, reach a part of the population that is impervious to the influence of mass media and demand active

participation in the process of communication. When discussing folk media, according to him,

> it is important to remind ourselves that they are not mere quaint relics of the past, but vigorously active and highly functional cultural institutions performing functions vital to the well-being of society: they provide entertainment, disseminate information, inculcate socially accepted norms and values, and perform a general socializing function.[3]

Despite their enthusiasm, these writers, and others, would warn that not all folk media are flexible enough to be used for developmental purposes. Eapen has written:

> Their social authenticity has to be retained, the integrity of their forms have to be kept. Purists are touchy about pouring new wine into old bottles. Mutilations of the form have occasionally happened and one has to be wary on this score. Some of the folk media do not depend basically on spoken words. For example, the traditional drama is a cocktail of gesture, mime, music, poetry and limited dialogue. Is the non-verbal aspect a deterrent to purposeful communication?[4]

Dissanayake also showed some caution concerning the adaptability of folk media to express messages of modern society. He wrote:

> When we study the experiments that have been conducted in this field in countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Indonesia, a point which strikes us with increasing force is that the folk media, as they are, often cannot be employed for the purpose of disseminating modern messages. In trying to adapt traditional media to suit modern conditions a question that is likely to prove troublesome is the concept of performance. Clearly, there is a wide and deep gap between the concepts of performance adhered to by traditional artists and modern communicators. The intimate personal relationship between the parties in communication and the absence of the tyranny of time are two concepts, which, counter to modern communication, are central to folk media performers. Also, in traditional societies, the products of these media have not become commodities as in modern, urban societies. Numerous instances have been reported in India where the audiences were hostile and walked away during performances of folk plays whose content had been modernized and the structure tailored to suit modern messages. I had similar experiences in Sri Lanka.[5]

An example is in order here. Crowley, in his research in the Bahamas, found that a folk medium such as story telling cannot be modified for social awareness messages because the stories are told for entertainment and to gain prestige through entertaining. He related that stories consciously educative, patriotic or otherwise designed to

persuade people to a point of view would be strongly objectionable to Bahamians.[6]

Some purists would argue that any use of folk media for developmental purposes should be avoided. Bordenave seems to be among this group:

> Developmental thinkers' obsession with goal achievement and not with human growth may take up these folk media as another set of instruments for changing people's way of thinking, feeling and behaving. And this is not the purpose and the function of the traditional communication media! . . . I am afraid that as soon as the people realize that their folk songs, poems and art are being used for subliminal propaganda they will let them die.[7]

As often is the case, although we have had a considerable amount of talk about whether folk media can be used to transmit developmental messages, we have had very little systematic research on the question.[8]

One of the few such studies was conducted by Verghese and Bhandari who assessed the comparative effectiveness of *Munadi*[9] and the public address system in creating awareness about an event in a rural Indian setting. Two villages in India were selected for the study. In one, the message was conveyed by the village *chowkidar* (watchman) over the *Munadi*; in the other, the same information was disseminated through a public address system. The message dealt with an exhibition which was to be organized in each village by the Primary Health Centre. In interviewing villagers two and three days after the messages were made, the authors found that both media were effective (*Munadi* more so with respondents over 30 years of age; public address system more so with literate persons). However, as far as understanding was concerned, respondents preferred the folk medium.[10]

Sargent, looking at information flow patterns in six villages representing three racial groups in rural Malaysia, concluded that interpersonal communication is particularly important in a multi-racial society such as Malaysia where the message might be blocked by linguistic, cultural or semantic obstacles. He reported that it was apparent in all six communities that the horizontal movement of information (from villager to villager) accounted for the greatest volume of social change knowledge. In most villages, Sargent wrote, information spread by word of mouth —from toddy shops, reading rooms, main tap-water points or temples.[11]

In still another recent study, Dissanayake tried to determine whether rural audiences in Sri Lanka preferred the folk drama, *Sokari*, in its pure form or in a modernized version with a contemporary theme. Using two groups of villagers (those over 30 years of age, those under

30), he found that three-fourths of those over 30 preferred the traditional form while three-fourths of those under 30 years of age selected the modernized version.[12]

Using Folk Media in Their Traditional Settings

One of the first Third World countries which attempted to preserve the cultural identity of indigenous performing arts and to bring a sense of functional relevancy to them was India. That government in 1954 established a Song and Drama Division as an arm of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to convert the wealth of performing arts to developmental communication functions. Since then, an average of 14,000 folk performances a year have been conducted on the community level. The division has 800 artists (50 per cent of whom are folk and traditional) and nearly 400 private, registered troupes, the latter commissioned to present performances on various development themes. For years, All India Radio, in its rural broadcasting, has used folk media in the form of a daily program narrated by conventional characters who convey the typical life and folklore of the rural areas of particular All India Radio stations.[13]

Ranganath reported on a number of South Indian experiments to make folk media better carriers of modern messages. At the Bangalore Center, for example, the traditional art forms experimented with were categorized as: 1. flexible, such as puppet, *Katha*[14] and song varieties, 2. rigid, such as ritual dances which rejected new messages but remained highly popular with sections of the masses for religious and ritualistic reasons and 3. rigid with flexible elements, such as some of the characters (jester,[15] sage, etc.) or thematic situations.[16]

An Indian folk medium discovered to be too rigid was *Yellamma* songs, popular with the rural masses in northern Karnataka in Central South India. Followers of Goddess Yellamma, in whose praise the songs are rendered, are usually poor people with large families; correspondingly, it was decided to alter the songs' contents to include calculated, indirect family planning messages. The experiment failed because the people thought the messages were incongruous and sacrilegious. An example of a rigid folk form with flexible elements was *Yakshagana*,[17] the traditional dance-drama of coastal Karnataka. In *Yakshagana*, the jester enjoys freedom to pass comments on issues of contemporary relevance. In this experiment, initially unwilling performers were persuaded to permit the jester to carry modern messages, such as family planning, communal harmony and national unity; however, although the people enjoyed the performance, they missed the jester's message or

took a negative attitude to the message because it came from the joking jester. After six years of experiments, the project was a success when the jester assumed the role of a critic of unyielding ideas.[18]

Documenting other folk media in India, one source listed story telling of five types (folklore tales, ballad singing, *Harikatha*, *Pad* or painted scroll recital, and *Kavad* or story box), *Kavi Gan*, *Tamasha* and *Burrakatha*. *Harikatha* is a one-man show, a discourse in story and song. Its basic motives and contents are oriented towards, 1. the necessity for devotion and 2. the necessity for a simple method of communicating religious experiences and their social implications. *Harikatha* is adaptable to contemporary themes because it comments on ways of living and on self-improvement.[19] *Kavi Gan*, or poet's song, is a typical folk form of the Bengali region which uses impromptu dialogue between two groups of poets, each led by a *Kavi Sarkar* (lead singer). The songs propose solutions to problems such as famine, etc. *Tamasha* is the 400-year-old folk theater of Maharashtra which employs an harmonious blend of music, dance and drama, and *Burrakatha* is the ballad singing so popular in Andhra Pradesh. *Burrakatha* performers are considered chroniclers of people's activities, customs and social practices, as well as recorders of the hopes of the future. After independence, the Indian government chose this folk form to convey to rural audiences messages of self-reliance, cooperative effort, rural development, national savings and family planning.[20]

The manner in which the messages are conveyed is illustrated by an Indian puppet show entitled, " The Revenge Against the Elephant," which depicted the theme of strength in cooperation. In the story, the animals decide to cooperate in driving the elephant crazy as revenge for his killing of birds. A woodpecker pecked out the elephant's eyes, after which a frog led him to the river where he drowned.[21]

Revival and preservation of folk media have occurred in other parts of the Third World. After neraly dying a few years ago, Chinese puppet shows are making a comeback in Hong Kong, partly because of their inclusion in the Hong Kong Arts Festival.[22] In Southeast Asia, most governments—but expecially those of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines—have increased their emphasis on resuscitation of folk media. In Indonesia, studies and inventories are being made on indigenous communication forms such as *Beber*,[23] *Wayang Orang* (traditional opera of masked characters in live performance), *Wayang Kulit* (leather shadow play), *Wayang Golek* (wooden-puppet show), *Ketoprak* (Javanese operetta), *Lobruk*[24] (operetta of men) and *Reog*.[25] All of these forms are being used in developmental projects. Colletta wrote that Indonesia historically has used these art-drama forms to promote social and politi-

cal transformation. For example, during 1945-49, *Wayang Suluh* (torch or guiding light) was born as a means to encourage armed struggle against the Dutch, and in the 1960s, *Wayang Pancasila* (five principles of *Wayang*) was initiated by the Ministry of Information to communicate the ideological pillars of the nation. *Wayang* has been used recently to spread family planning messages among Indonesians.[26]

Writing about governmental use of *wayang*, Barry Newman in the January 4, 1977, *Wall Street Journal* said:

> The government has a ' secretariat ' for the country's story-tellers, who are called *dalangs*, and encourages them to work messages about birth control and rice production into their tales. With national elections due next May, the government reportedly is also inviting the dalangs to add political advertising to their repertoire—in favor of the government party, of course. . . . Complex as the plots (of *wayang*) may be, their ultimate messages are blunt. They deal with ethics and the uses of power—a couple of areas of more than ethereal interest of late to the Indonesian government and some of its less altruistic servants.

Malaysian authorities have recognized the value of employing folk media to communicate development messages to rural audiences. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting since the early 1970s has used troupes to present the classic *Ramayana* figures of *Wayang Kulit* (shadow play) to rural people with themes of anti-Communism, the advantages of the New Economic Policy, Second Malaysia Plan, the national ideology and birth control. The Penang Information Department hires a Chinese drama troupe to perform skits which include government messages couched in humorous dialogue. Mahoney, who interviewed government officials on folk media, wrote of these skits:

> The State Director . . . stressed the effectiveness of this indirect approach, livening up a dry topic like tenant registration. In Communist-threatened areas, heads of households must register all residents with the police—an unpopular regulation among the rural Chinese. The Information Department writes the scripts for skits explaining why this is necessary, using a buffoon-like character who can't grasp the rationale behind voter registration and a wise person who tries to explain it to him. Such skits are interspersed in variety programs featuring singing and dancing by local youth organizations.[27]

Boria music, a popular Penang blend of calypso rhythm and traditional Malay music, is used to transmit government information; in 1975, a *Boria* song urging the use of a new strain of rice was among the most popular music in Malaysia. *Boria* plays, from which the music emanates, use unemployment, the New Economic Policy, goodwill and social

problems as themes. Hamima wrote that the trend is to interpret and analyze government messages in comic sketches.[28]

Philippine drama forms, such as *Duplo*, *Zarzuela* and *Comedia*, can be used to disseminate social information to the public, but Patron believes the potential of folk media for developmental communications is yet untapped in her country.[29]

Instances of utilization of folk media in their natural surroundings to transmit social messages abound in various parts of Africa as well. For example, 30 drama students of Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria are experimenting with *Wasan Manoma* (plays for farmers) to communicate specific developmental objectives to rural people.[30] They use folk media, such as masquerade, drumming and dancing, story telling and songs of wandering praise singers, in live performances in fields under mango trees or wherever villagers gather. The performances make messages immediate, pertinent and participation- and self reliance-oriented and themes of the plays relate to local people's lives. For example, one play concerned itself with the rhetoric of government and agricultural development, another with fertilizer swindling by tradesmen and corrupt officials, a third with a portrayal of a selfish peasant farmer manipulating a weak headman against fellow farmers, and finally, one showing the need for farmers to cooperate and organize themselves more effectively against corruption. After the plays are over, the audience is invited to join in discussions with students and rural sociologists involved in the project. Script development also takes villagers into consideration; students spend time in villages learning of farmers' problems before they write scripts. Each play is honed to make a precise and detailed statement, argues for self-reliance and takes note of religious sensitivities of various regions.[31] (Similar local drama troupes exist in the Philippines, one of which is the Kulturang Tabonon sa Dabaw (Brown Culture Drama Group of Davao). Kulturang Tabonon prepares and presents dramas for social awareness, including themes on the struggle of the oppressed, the plight of cultural minorities and the efforts at community organization. After presenting their plays, the troupes divide audiences into small groups to discuss issues brought out in the plays.)[32]

In Botswana's Central District, a group of government extension workers and community members use the yearly *Laedza Batanani* festivals to communicate to the masses. Through drama, puppeteering, music and group discussion, the extension workers present programs which deal with basic community concerns. Again, participation is stressed as local leaders attend pre-festival workshops to decide key social issues to cover in the songs they write and the dramas they out-

line.[33]

Folk media are used to communicate with rural audiences in other parts of the Third World. The *Bernameh* and puppet are employed to encourage family planning in Iran; folk tunes convey instructional information on change of currency and changeover to the right hand drive in Nigeria, and the *Kakaku* (comic play) is a developmental instrument in Ghana. *Chamsoun* (ballad) and *Karakhouz* (shadow puppet) in Egypt, calypso in Trinidad[34] and folk theater in Jamaica[35] have been found to be adaptable for social message transmission.

Adapting Folk Media to Broadcasting and Film

Besides employing traditional media in their rural settings, most Third World nations have begun to experiment with adapting them to mass media such as press, radio, television and film. Thus, media such as broadcasting, which have been blamed for the decline of folk art,[36] are contributing " identity and continuity to national culture by giving expression to the indigenous arts,"[37] and in the process, are helping preserve them. Iran is an example of this phenomenon; its National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT) has since 1971 established a Center for the Preservation of Traditional Music, among other things such as festivals of the arts, etc. Another center financed by Iranian television collects music from all over the nation and encourages active preservation by offering grants to old musicians who cannot earn a living by their music. These musicians' performances are recorded and made available to broadcasting.[38] South Korean broadcasters have gone to the villages to tape folk arts, and Malaysian broadcasters have brought folk performers to studios to preserve their arts. Radio-Télévision Algerienne, in an effort to patronize regional arts, sponsors cultural weeks in several regional centers; NIRT in Iran devotes the third week of each month to the folklore arts of various provinces.

Just as there are questions concerning folk media conveying modern messages, so are there questions as to whether some folk media can be adapted to radio or television. The Bangalore Center in India, for example, concluded that traditional song patterns can be adapted to broadcasting but that visual art forms demand considerable care. The Bangalore researchers said that the messages are more credible if the folk medium is performed in its natural environment, not in a radio or television studio.[39] Katz and Wedell, discussing marrying folk media to broadcasting, gave four reasons why they often do not blend well:

1. Folk arts tend to be eclipsed by the pace of modernization. Katz

and Wedell said some performing arts were dying even before broadcasting made its appearance, e.g., Iranian story telling and Thai classical dance-drama. In some instances, tourists have been blamed for the demise or decline of folk media, this being the situation with Balinese dance-drama.

2. Traditional media have limited repertoires while mass media demand novelty, the result being that broadcasting, for example, quickly exhausts the limited classical themes.

3. Open, village square mettings of folk media do not adapt well to confined or tiny broadcast studios. The problem is compounded when broadcast stations do not use mobile broadcast units.

4. Because of the festive and occasional character of many traditional media, " they cannot be made into just another program on a Tuesday evening."[40]

In Thailand, the folk art form most successfully adapted to radio and television has been *Mau Lum*, a folk opera or folk story drawn from the pool of north-eastern Thai tales and myths. The rhyming songs of *Mau Lum* allow for improvisation. According to Katz and Wedell, efforts have been made to expand the repertoire of *Mau Lum* singers to " take account of campaigns of rural development, anti-communist propaganda, and other contemporary and development topics."[41] The earliest days of Thai television were based on much wider use of traditional art materials, such as shadow plays, puppeteering, dance theater, etc. But the amount has dwindled with the addition of more hours of television time, easy access of foreign shows, the invention of the videotape recorder and sheer exhaustion.[42]

In Senegal, praise singers (*Griot*) who sing of lineages and history and act as chroniclers of an oral tradition, are a regular part of radio-television programming; in fact, praise singers are on the payroll of the station. In Japan and Iran, traditional story telling techniques have been applied to broadcasting. *Kamishibai*, the traditional Japanese story telling technique which normally uses 12 pictures with a dramatic script read by a narrator, and which depends upon repetition of message, has been used on television to teach Bible stories.[43]

Although he laments that Iranian story telling of the teahouse or the *Ruhozi* theater-on-the-pool has changed greatly since used by Alexander the Great to keep his troops alert at night, Kazem sees some hope in a recent Radio Iran survey which showed that 5.7 per cent of the programs during a six-month period were devoted to story telling themes. Also, 21 Iranian cinema productions in the past decade were based on ancient folktales, he reported.[44] Some of Katz and Wedell's sources thought the success of the Iranian television series, " Morad Barghi,"

is partly related to its roots in the *Ruhozi*. They also agreed that the television form is vulgar and unauthentic.[45]

A number of traditional media have been part of Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) content during the past five years, including *Mak Yong*,[46] *Wayang Kulit* (shadow play) and *Dikir Barat* (folk songs). There are three standard tunes known to Malaysian villagers; to these tunes, participants put their own words, making sure lines one and three rhyme, as well as lines two and four. The lyrics are spontaneous creations of the two group leaders who, each with his own chorus of as many as 50 people, compete until one leader can think of nothing new to add. When *Dikir Barat* is put on radio every Wednesday noon, the performance is limited to 45 minutes. The leader of the first group, with a chorus of ten, sings for ten minutes, followed by a faster-paced counter by the second leader for another ten minutes. The RTM program director gives the leaders the subjects he wants covered, which includes praise for government and messages from villagers to the government.[47] Another folk form, *Boria* drama, has been performed weekly on radio and television since the early 1970s. Hamima discussed how these presentations were used to promote government ideology:

> In all stories the plots were the same, i.e., three friends meet and one of them is an uninformed person who adheres to traditional ways of life. The other two inject government ideology in him and explain government moves. However, the uninformed person must not say any kind of wisecrack about the bad side of the issues.[48]

Between May and August 1973, the Malaysian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting launched a competition of folk music, " Dendang Rakyat," on television, the purposes of which were to educate the masses and indirectly prepare them for the acceptance of government projects and plans of nation building, to break down the feelings of regionalism and to provide an outlet for creativity and expression.[49] Each regional station of RTM was assigned a particular folk music genre to concentrate upon; the themes used in each were similar, dealing with developmental topics such as the Second Malaysia Plan, New Economic Policy and the national ideology. Types of messages transmitted can be gleaned from these examples. One of the *Boria* skits included this line: " Make full use of the opportunities provided by the government. Listen to the radio for the new change the government is preparing," while a *Dondang Sayang* (medium where two persons debate impromptu and in verse until one either cannot think of a response or gives the better answer) presentation urged people to eat more local fruits. A *Dikir Barat* skit proclaimed " The government's new economic policy is to eradicate

poverty," and implored the public to support the state's coalition government and to invest in government programs and save in government banks. A *Keroncong* group extolled the virtues of the national capital.[50]

The Malaysian minister of information as early as April 1973 stated his government would emphasize folk media. He said at that time: " Folk tradition is being used by the Ministry of Information to send messages to the people in the rural areas and the department is trying to use other fields for this purpose. Oral tradition is used as an agent for socialisation in the society for the purpose of national identity."[51]

Implementing Interpersonal Communication Networks

As I have written elsewhere, one of the wrong assumptions made about the Third World is that communication networks do not exist if they do not conform to Westernized, more modern information systems.[52] However, one does not have to spend much time in Asia, Africa or Latin America to realize that there are many effective interpersonal communication networks functioning at all levels. Labelled " bush telegraph " in some areas, these networks are both reliable and swift. For example, tourists on the Caribbean island of Anguilla told me about their hotel reservations and car and boat rentals being made in advance without the use of formal media, posts, telephone or telegraph. I have had similar experiences with the effectiveness of interpersonal communication networks in the Caribbean and Asia. In Grenada, after trying unsuccessfully to contact a former information officer by telephone, I asked about him in the town square, leaving a message with three unsystematically chosen people that if they saw him, they were to tell him to look me up at my guest house. Two hours later, the former information chief was in my room; the message had reached him.[53] In Malaysia, during a tense racial period in April 1973, a self-imposed curfew went into effect among people in Kuala Lumpur. Mass media completely ignored the situation on the advice of the government that coverage would intensify matters. I first heard of all this in Penang, over 200 miles away, when our *amah* (housemaid) warned us that we "should stock up on rice because trouble was coming." She had picked up the information almost immediately through interpersonal networks.

Hachten, discussing Africa, gives similar examples, saying that in many places, the most important channel for the circulation of news and rumors is still word of mouth. He said newcomers to Morocco are amazed at the speed with which news and rumors spread throughout the nation. He wrote that, " Within hours, news of the March 1965

Casablanca riots had reached the market places of every city and town in the country, despite the government's complete ban on the news in press and radio."[54]

In fact, the swiftness of news transmission over these systems often is the bane of mass media practitioners in smaller countries. A Bahamian editor told me that, because the islands are small, people feel an obligation to spread information so that everyone knows the news before his paper comes out. In fact, he lamented that his paper is often accused of inaccuracy because a reporter was not on the spot when something happened, whereas a number of villagers were there.[55] Also, the accuracy of information that travels over these informal networks is seldom questioned. Pye said this results from the tendency in these cultures for people to appraise the reliability of the information " on the basis of their personal relationship with the source of information."[56] Fanon, discussing what was called "Arab telephone " in Algeria, felt that information transmitted over such interpersonal nets was unchallengeable.[57]

Indigenous leaders are often used to spread information informally. Colletta, discussing Indonesia, gives examples of *dukuns* (midwives) disseminating family planning information,[58] clan religious leaders promoting the *bimas* (the mass guidance in rice cultivation program in West Sumatra) and *jamu* (herbal medicine) salesmen spreading ideas. He wrote, " The delight in watching young and old alike enraptured in the folksy humor and local adages of the *jamu* salesman is a sight to behold."[59] Mahoney, quoting Malaysian information specialists, agrees that the most effective way of convincing rural audiences is to enlist a prominent village personality (such as the headman) to broadcast the message.[60] Patron wrote that Philippine research shows that of all communication agents, personal sources are the most credible and respected.[61] As an example, in upcountry Kalimantan, a village headman is involved in reminding his people to practice birth control. The bell outside his house, used to call meetings and give warnings, is rung every evening to tell villagers that it is time to take the pill.

Other traditional communication forums, such as the marketplace,[62] tea or coffee houses, pubs, transportation systems and village meetings, are being used to reach rural audiences. The organizational structure of the Comilla Project in Bangladesh (a project which claimed its success from the use of interpersonal communication) was built into traditional communication apparatus such as village meetings.[63] The detailed village meeting setup in Indonesia has been used for developmental campaigns;[62] so has the traditional *rodi ghar* (a cultural meeting place of village youth) of western Nepal.[65] Africa has a number of unique

traditional communication techniques, among them being the " talking drums " and " talking Horns," which can be used for achieving developmental communication goals. The early missionaries on the continent learned to use the drums and horns to convey their religious messages.[66] Hachten, while extolling the virtues of interpersonal communication in Africa, said the " mammy wagons " of West Africa—" the overloaded ' tro-tro ' buses or trucks carrying women traders to upcountry villages from the city "—are still important channels for news flow.[67] He showed how President Nkrumah from his earliest political days used these bus drivers to pick up and pass along word of political events and ideas to the bushes. Nkrumah used other interpersonal communication methods as well, according to Hachten:

> In 1961 the government devised an organized version of this technique, paying small additional sums to literate government employees whose work took them to the bush regularly. . . . Also, in the rural areas the traditional ' town criers ' were paid nominal sums by the government to spread news and opinion orally to interested villagers.[60]

Conclusion

As Third World governments use folk media and interpersonal communication channels to transmit the developmental message to rural peoples, it becomes apparent that they have in their hands a truly grassroots propaganda machine capable of being harnessed to also promote non-developmental interests. Therefore, because the dividing line between developmental, governmental and political ends can be hair thin, it is possible (and is happening) for folk media to be misused to promote the development of national leaders, rather than the development of national policies and programs. That, indeed, would be unfortunate in a world where governments already control so many mass media used to promote their own ends.

Notes

1. H. K. Ranganath, "A Probe into the Traditional Media: Telling the People Tell Themselves," *Media Asia*, 3: 1 (1976), p. 25.

2. K. E. Eapen, " Specific Problems of Research and Research Training in Asian/African Countries," in *Communication Research in the Third World: The Need for Training*, Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1976, pp. 18–19. Gargi, comparing classical and folk theater, made some of the same observations. Balwant Gargi, *Folk Theater of India*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966, see chapter 1.

3. Wimal Dissanayake, " New Wine in Old Bottles: Can Folk Media Convey Modern Messages? " *Journal of Communication*, Spring 1977, pp. 122–124.

4. Eapen, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

5. Dissanayake, *op. cit.*, pp. 123–124.

6. Daniel J. Crowley, *I Could Talk Old-Story Good: Creativity in Bahamian Folklore*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, p. 13.

7. Juan Diaz Bordenave, "The Role of Folk Media: A Point of View," *Instructional Technology Report*, September 1975, p. 4.

8. I found very few books and articles on this aspect. Looking at thousands of citations on the Caribbean, 213 of which dealt with Caribbean folklore, I found not one discussed the use of folklore for communication or for meeting national goals. The same can be said for other parts of the Third World. Virtually nothing appears in bibliographies such as the AMIC (Singapore) series on mass communications in various Asian nations or in John A. Lent, *Asian Mass Communications: A Comprehensive Bibliography*, Philadelphia: Temple University School of Communications & Theater, 1975; supplement, 1978.

9. Dissemination of information followed by drum beating, a form used in rural India.

10. T. Verghese and Shri Vinod Bhandari, "Folk Media As a Channel of Communication: A Study of 'Munadi' in a Rural Area," *The Journal of Family Welfare*, June 1977, pp. 33–39.

11. Leslie Sargent, "Information Flow Patterns in Villages of Rural Malaysia," *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, 4: 2 (1976), pp. 43–64.

12. Dissanayake, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

13. Ranganath, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

14. Art of story telling in song, spoken word, mime and impersonation.

15. The clown, a stock character in many folk plays of India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, etc. is often used as the agent of modern messages, usually because he can indulge in impromptu observations about contemporary affairs without hurting the artistic fiber of the folk medium. Apart from the clown, in some other folk dramas such as *Jatra* and *Nautanki* in India, other characters are allowed to improvise dialogue and could be used to convey modern messages, according to Dissanayake. Dissanayake, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

16. Ranganath, *op. cit.*, p. 28. Dissanayake makes only two distinctions of folk media: open form and closed form. He said *Wayang* plays and *Lodruk* in Indonesia and *Nautanki* and *Tamasha* in India are flexible, while rituals connected with the Pattini cult in Sri Lanka or *Yellamma* songs in India contain closed forms. Dissanayake, *op. cit.*

17. Gargi devotes a chapter to *Yakshagana* in his book. Other chapters deal with Indian folk drama such as *Jatra*, *Nautanki*, *Bhavai*, *Tamasha*, *Ramlila*, *Raslila*, *Therukoothu* and *Chhau*, among others. Gargi, *op. cit.*

18. Ranganath, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

19. On the other hand, Parmar wrote that harnessing folk music as a channel of communication is a complex task because the appeal is emotional and words have only a secondary importance. Shyam Parmar, *Traditional Folk Media in India*, New Delhi: Geka Books, date not konwn.

20. "Abstracts of Seminar/Workshop Papers," *IEC Newsletter*, No. 20, 1975, p. 4.

21. *Ibid.*

22. "China's Ancient Puppet Shows Are Revised in Hong Kong," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 10, 1977, p. 10-f. For examples of puppeteering on Taiwan, see, "Cloth Bag Shows," *Free China Review*, December 1977, p. 54; "Shadow World of

Puppets," *Free China Review*, March 1978.

23. Shadow play painted on a scroll in which originally the scroll was unwound as the story unfolded.

24. *Lobruk* is based on contemporary themes. The performing clown of *Lobruk* carries on a dialogue with the audience, commenting on items of a contemporary nature. The intimacy between the clown and audience makes for good communication.

25. Comprised of jokers discussing topics of the day in a humorous manner to the accompaniment of drums they beat.

26. Nat Colletta, "The Use of Indigenous Culture As a Medium for Development: The Indonesian Case," *Instructional Technology Report*, September 1975, pp. 2, 9–11.

27. Haynes Mahoney III, "Notes on Rural Communications Program, Malaysian Government's Field Services Division, Department of Information, July 15–Aug. 20, 1975," unpublished paper, Temple University.

28. Hamima Dona Mustafa, "Boria As a Folk Medium," paper presented to John A. Lent's Mass Communications II course, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, January 1973.

29. Josefina S. Patron, "Communication and National Development," *Silliman Journal*, Second Quarter 1976, p. 123.

30. In Uganda, the University of Makarere drama troupe also took its traditional drama performances to the villages and recorded the experiences as a "tremendous success." Alfred Opubor, "Theatrical Forms of Communication in Black Africa," *Instructional Technology Report*, September 1975, p. 12.

31. Michael Etherton, "Play's the Thing but Demand for Fertilizer Comes First," London *Times*, Special Report: Nigeria, December 1, 1977, p. xv.

32. "'Kulturang Tabonon sa Dabaw,'" *Devcom*, 2: 3, pp. 20–22. Also, selected communities in Laguna, Philippines, used rural theater in 1975–76 to inculcate positive attitudes about family planning. "Rural Theater," *Devcom*, 2: 4, p. 21.

33. "Village Festivals and Folk Media," *ICIT Report*, July 1976, pp. 8–9. For an example of the use of folk festivals in Bangladesh, see, Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, "Mela or Folk Festivals in Bangladesh," *Instructional Technology Report*, September 1975, pp. 12–13.

34. If one wants to know the societal issues of Trinidad, he is advised to go to the calypso tents. V. S. Naipaul has called the calypso "the ballad, the broadsheet, the *Punch* and *New Yorker* of Trinidad." See, John A. Lent, *Third World Mass Media and Their Search for Modernity: The Case of Commonwealth Caribbean, 1717–1976*, Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1977, p. 178.

35. Jamaican "Drama for Progress" is used to combat illiteracy. The staff obtain their script material by listening to villagers for hours. They use traditional folk characters in the suspense-packed plays. Arthur Gillette, "'Rough' Theatre Serves Literacy in Jamaica," *Instructional Technology Report*, September 1975, p. 5.

36. Gargi, for example, gives numerous examples of Indian folk drama being damaged by popular films, to the extent folk artists in some cases have discarded their traditional dancing and singing and adopted current film tunes. Gargi, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

37. Elihu Katz and George Wedell, *Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977, p. 141.

38. Tran Van Khe, "Traditional Music As a Living Force," *Communicator*, January 1978, p. 44.

39. Ranganath, *op. cit.*

40. Katz and Wedell, *op. cit.*, pp. 200–202.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 199–200.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 198–199.

43. "Ka . . . mi . . . shi . . . ka . . . mi . . . shi . . . bai," *AMCB*, September 1975, p. 19.

44. Kazem Mohamed-Nejad, "Naghalli or Story Teller's Art and Craft and the Impact of Mass Media Upon This Traditional Medium in Iran," *Instructional Technology Report*, September 1975, pp. 4, 12.

45. Katz and Wedell, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

46. Musical drama through sketches, using traditional characters taken from *Ramayana* stories.

47. "Broadcast of Folk Songs Carries the Development Message in Malaysia," *Instructional Technology Report*, January 1976, p. 8.

48. Hamima, *op. cit.*

49. Dol Ramli, director of bradcasting, as quoted in Aziz Muhammed and Zainie Rahmat, "Folk Songs and Folk Tradition As Agents of Change," paper presented to John A. Lent's Comparative Media Systems course, University Sains Malaysia, Penang, January 1974.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*

52. Lent, *Third World Mass Media . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 177–178.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

54. William Hachten, *Muffled Drums*, Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1971, p. 13.

55. Lent, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

56. Lucian Pye, editor, *Communications and Political Development*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 24.

57. Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1965, p. 78.

58. Rogers reported that the traditional midwife of Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Mexico and Indonesia has very high credibility about health and related matters. Everett Rogers, "Traditional Midwives in the Developing Nations," unpublished manuscript, 1975. Chalkley said the midwife is the best communicator in many parts of Asia. Alan Chalkley, "On Getting One's Boots 'Muddy,'" *Media Asia*, 3: 4 (1976), p. 222.

59. Colletta, *op. cit.*, pp. 9–10.

60. Mahoney, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

61. Patron, *op. cit.*

62. Patron briefly discusses group listening as a communication function in Philippine *sari-sari* stores. Patron, *op. cit.*

63. Syed A. Rahim, "Communication and Rural Development in Bangladesh," Honolulu: East West Communication Institute, 1976.

64. Types of village meetings in Indonesia are *selapanan* (meet once in 35 days), *rapat desa* (once in three months) and *rapat tahunan* (once a year). Astrid Susanto, "The Right To Communicate: The Indonesian Case," in L. S. Harms and Jim Richstad, eds, *Evolving Perspectives on the Right To Communicate*, Honolulu: East West Communication Institute, 1977.

65. Tek Bahadur Khatri, *Mass Communications in Nepal*, Kathmandu: Department of Information, 1976, p. 93.

66. Ludovick A. Ngatara, "From Talking Drum to Talking Paper," *Index on*

Censorship, May–June 1978, pp. 29–32.

67. Hachten, *op. cit.*, p. 11. Similar observations can be made about information flow via long-distance taxis in Jamaica and Southeast Asia.

68. *Ibid.*