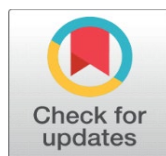


# THEATRE AS A MEDIUM OF INFOTAINMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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## DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i1.2023.5448](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i1.2023.5448)

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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## ABSTRACT

We live in a country which is diverse with the presence of different caste, language, culture, custom, religion, creed and tribes. This paper is trying to explore how theatre works as a tool for the social development and how it is helpful for the developmental aspects of the society. And as a medium of infotainment, how theatre is helpful for bringing the change and highlights the issues of the society. Theatre is a useful medium for the social development and promotes growth. It is one of the most powerful medium for developmental activities and it conveys messages for both Socioeconomic development of the society. Several themes such as education, agriculture, sanitation and hygiene, water conservation, child labor, child marriage, human rights, corruption, caste discrimination, women empowerment, awareness of disease, family planning, vaccination, nutrition, environment pollution, communal harmony etc. This proposed paper is an attempt to ensure the use of theatre to reach the common people by interacting and involving them in the process of change and development of the country.

**Keywords:** Theatre, Development, Communication, Infotainment, Collaborative Action etc

## 1. INTRODUCTION

From the ancient time theatre is being used as a tool for spreading information, aware people about different issues and most importantly for entertainment purpose. This article brings in the previous practice of theatre as a developmental tool in present scenario, arguing that the theatre still has a potential to support social change and development in this present era but it needs collaborative action. Social development means as overall development of the areas social, economic, political and cultural advancement and growth - so that the people can lead a pleasant life. Communication is an important human behavior which helps in the process of Social, Political and Cultural transformation of a society. Each and every society around the world develops their own systems of Communication which ultimately lead to evolve various performing arts and the social transformation that encourage development ultimately results in the betterment and wellbeing of the society. Different traditional forms of communication constitute a potential message which conveys messages for not only social development but also economic development. (Das-2013). According to Ranganath (1980) described folk media as living expressions of the lifestyle and culture of people evolved through the years. In India mass media proved impersonal and unbelievable in contrast with the familiar performance of traditional artists whom the villagers "could not only see and hear but even touch". Even today there are

several remote and isolated areas in India where people practice their own traditional way of life and have their own folk form of performing arts through which they are entertaining themselves and developing their sociocultural life. The only way to reach them and encourage their participation for education and development is the use of performing arts specially theatre where we can bring them under one umbrella so that they can actively initiate collaborative action for social, economic and cultural development with gaining knowledge through infotainment aspect of theatre. It must be noted that theatre for development should not instruct people on what to do, as our project had been doing, but should rather arouse the people's capacity to participate and decide things for themselves' (MDA, 1990, p. 354).

## 2. THEATRE AS A MEDIUM OF INFOTAINMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The term infotainment means information plus entertainment. The term is used here to indicate the potential of theatre to entertain people alongwith providing them the information. From ancient time theatre is being used as a powerful mode of communication and is the inseparable part of Indian culture. But broadly speaking, development represents ideas and practices designed to bring about positive change in human societies. Folk Theatre is a composite art in India with a fusion of elements from music, dance and it is a medium of entertainment for the rural mass of the country. The most important thing of folk theatre is that it has roots in native culture, it has its own local identity and social values besides providing mass entertainment helped Indian society as powerful tools of interpersonal, inter-group and inter-village communication for ages. Folk theatre has been used extensively in India to showcase critical social, political and cultural issues in a very simple and meaning full way in the form of theatrical messages to create awareness among the people. As theatre is an native and open form it breaks all kinds of formal barriers of human communication and directly reach to the heart of the people. As theatre directly connects to the emotions of the people hence the public gets the direct message and get influenced a lot from the theatrical presentation.

Initially folk theatre was based on the local native languages of the regions and its theme was purely devotional which was brought from their religion, local legends and mythology. Later, it became more social in content and began to focus on folk stories and biographies of local heroes. Then with course of time it began to focus on the social issues to aware the public about the social problems. As people's participation is important, Theatre for Development ask for collaborative approach to educate the marginalized rural as well as the urban people of India. Communication is directly related to Collaborative Actions. Before Independence, Folk Theatre was effective in spreading patriotic feelings among people and arose them to fight against the British colonial rule. It was also very effective means in many political and social campaigns launched by Mahatma Gandhi. After Independence the Union Government continues to utilize the Folk Theatre forms to convey messages and to generate awareness of the developmental programmes in the rural areas. On 25th May 1943, Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) was formed which aimed generate theatre artist for freedom struggle and to reach the rural mass with the national message. Theatre has also contributed to strengthen international relation. The author of History and Theatre in Africa Eckhard Breiting opines "The rise of Theatre for Development also marked a change in international relations. It was both the symptom and the result of the failures of 20 years of development policies that had insisted on the implantation of the materialist and technological culture of the North as the only possible road to the development, irrespective of the cultural and social environment."

Participation of local people, the use of local languages and dialects and highlighting the local problems along with the entertainment increase the acceptability of theatre among the rural masses of India. In India, mass media continue to be limited largely to the urban population traditional arts forms have survived for centuries and they will survive in future for their flexibility. They could be the media for the social change and social development in rural India. (Kumar-2006). 'Theatre for development' was initially inspired by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian cultural and educational theorist and practitioner, who believed that people gain knowledge through life experience but are persuaded by the oppressor to believe that their knowledge is irrelevant. Stimulating people to become conscious and to generate knowledge in their own interests is called the pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1970). And that is reflected in the work of his own student Augusto Boal, who developed the 'Theatre of the oppressed' a form of popular theatre, of the people, by the people, and for the people designed to help people learn ways of fighting oppression in their daily lives (Boal, 1982). (Scott-Danter, 1999) has realized that the use of theatre in a development environment has involved performing plays to convey strong social messages, with little or no audience participation. Gradually, the potential of theatre as a platform of discussion and of exploring current issues within a particular community in order to handle the adverse situation of the society. Theatre also serves as a collaborative tool by inviting audience to participate in the act, making it a genuine two-way medium for communicating information (Kasoma, 1974).

### 3. CONCLUSION

Theatre as a medium of infotainment has been one of the most effective medium and at the same time it also serves as a medium which helps the society in achieving the developmental goals and objectives. In order to assess the role of theatre in development, it is essential to understand the nature of the theatre and the concept of development. Theatre is a mirror of society which can leave a deep impression among the people. The principle of collaborative and communicational nature of theatre is very much impressive and it has a potential of empowering the people of grass root level in India. As it is the ancient medium of communication and has the scope of collaboration with people and encourages them to participate, it has the potential to convey messages of socio-economical advantage, which will result in both social and economic development of the society. But its success is totally dependent on the participation from the common man's side. So the people should come forward to join hand to hand and take part in this approach and actively use theatre as a medium then only they can develop the idle things of theatre for the social development.

### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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