

**The use of traditional forms of communication for rural
community development programmes in
Sri Lanka**



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Abstract

Experimentations of the Utilization of traditional forms of communication for rural development communication programmes has been recently popular aspect particularly in the developing regions of the world such as Latin America , South Africa, South India , Thailand, Bangladash, and so forth. The traditional forms of communication have been immensely utilized for the sake of achieving rural development goals in the south Asian region. When recommending a model for the rural development communication out of the traditional forms of communication, above trend of the Development communication came to my mind.

Can Sri Lankan Folk forms of communication be used for Development communication? If so, how is it applied in development communication practice in Sri Lanka? This is the research problem. Development Communication model from folk media performance that can be used at the grass- root level communication for the community development programmes of Sri Lanka is the research objective of this study. Hypothesis of the study is, Folk media performance can be effectively used in the capacity of development communication packages in the rural community development programmes in Sri Lanka. Folk media has a full potentiality and productivity to be implemented in the capacity of rather effective development communication than mainstream mass media that is being popularly used. This study is a participatory research. Live participatory observation, impact analysis using a Questionnaire, and direct interview tools have been used to analyze the impact of the proposed creative model of rural development communication. This research study was experimented at *Rasnayakapura* Divisional Secretariat, covering 27 *Grama Niladari* (GN) Divisions, in the North-Western Province. It was during the one year period from 1st Of August, 2004 to 31st July, 2005 attached to a Community Governance Rural Development project.

Traditional forms of communication can be utilized as a useful instrument in the rural community development communication programmes. Rural culture is full of communication features, which can be used in this respect. Rural society has developed a pattern of communication over several centuries.

For instance in folk songs, balled (*Kavikolaya*), Folk-drama (*Sokari, Kolam*), opera (*Geethanataka, Jahuta*), Traditional rituals (*Baliya, Samayama, Yagaya*), Devil Dance (*Dahaatasanniya*), satirical sketches, group singing and traditional drumming. These forms are rich in communication traits because of their closeness to rural life, credibility, Utilization of familiar signs & symbols, Participation of the same community, collective presentation, Utilization of past experiences, plot and the subjects from their own life and psychological understanding (attraction, attention, rationality).

Communicating a message through entertainments was the practice of this model. Folk songs, ritual performances, drumming and many of the folk communications were used creatively. Interactive communication took place between performances and the audiences at crucial moments. Finally Impact analysis was conducted after the overall 27 stages of experiment to evaluate the depth of planned communication and the impact on the targeted audience from the rural community.