

**ROLE OF MEDIA IN SOCIAL CHANGE: A CASE STUDY  
ON RURAL HEALTH IN A TRIBAL VILLAGE OF  
BIRBHUM DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL**

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**ABSTRACT**

The term media is meant of various channels of communication by which news, educational, health and promotional messages, programs, etc. are disseminated to a large number of people in a very short span of time, especially through utilization of print and electronic media such as newspapers, magazines cinema, radio, television and the internet. The word Social change refers to any significant alteration or modification that occurs in a situation over a period of time in the social order of a society. Communication helps to bring social changes in the society in various ways. Here, social changes are taken place in terms of getting better health outcomes of tribal communities with the effect of media. The present study has been conducted in a less connected tribal village of Birbhum District, West Bengal, through the application of observation and interview techniques. The main objectives of this paper is (a) to study the impact of media on tribal society (b) to examine what are the social changes are found in tribal society with special references to health. The result of the study depicted that instead of taking the help of ethno medical practitioner like witch doctors, tantric, ojha's for getting health care treatment, the tribal communities are going to take the treatment from rural medical practitioners, qualified doctors, and also from the hospitals, because of dissemination of health oriented messages scattered by the media

**Key-Words:-**Media, Social Change, Tribal, Rural Health.

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## INTRODUCTION

Media remains a dominant factor to set the mind of the rural people to the acceptance of developmental health oriented messages in the rural areas. It brings social changes among the tribal people in terms of getting better health care treatment over a period of time. In recent era, richness of media is very high in rural sector, because every tribal people either have television or radio in their home. Media has its own capacity to communicate with tribal people within a short span of time by informing them with the new programmes and policies of the government in regard to the health issues which is specially made for them. Media can make changes the thoughts of tribal people by providing planned campaigns about the health related issues in the rural areas. However, it is clearly understood that proper use of media help to bring social changes within the society. Indeed, keeping in mind the knowledge of the local culture of the tribal community, developmental health oriented messages should be made and disseminate through media. The Third President of US, Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809) said “...Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a Government, I should not hesitate for a moment to prefer the latter”. After that following the same reason the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru stated “.....I would rather have a completely free press with all the danger involved in the wrong use of that freedom, than a suppressed or regulated press”. The Government can be utilized the media in such a way that can work effectively as an instrument of social change in favour of the rural people. The word ‘Media’ is of those means of communication that facilitate dissemination of information, reach and influence to a vast number of people in a very short time especially through newspapers, magazines cinema, radio, television and the internet. Wilbur Schramm defined, “Mass Media” is especially a working group organized round some device for circulating the same message at about same time to large number of people. According to Keval. J. Kumar – 2010, “Mass Media” are the tools or technologies that facilitate dissemination of information and entertainment to a vast number of receivers. The concept “Social Change” is used to describe changes in the social structure and social relationships of a society. According to Jones, social change is described variations in or modifications of any aspects of social processes, social patterns, social interactions and social organization. Kingsley Davis says. “Social Change” is meant only such alterations as occur in social organization that is structure and function of society. Anderson and Perker observed, “Social Change” to involve alteration in the structure or

functioning of societal forms or processes themselves. Media are used to consider as an instrument of social change by conveying informative and persuasive messages from a Government to the people in the process of rapid development. The proportion of 'Scheduled Tribes' are countable and these communities are belonged to different linguistic ethno group. They are isolated from the society through ages and living in cluster by maintaining their own norms, customs and values. The concept of 'tribe' came from the Latin word 'tribus'. "...A group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor" (Oxford English Dictionary, IX, 1933, p:339, as cited in Fried, 1975,p.7). According to L.P. Vidyarthi ".....The tribe is a social group with definite territory, common name, common district, common culture, behaviour of an endogamous group, common taboos, existence of distinctive social and political system, full faith in leaders and self-sufficiency in their distinct economy". D.N. Majumdar defined ".....A tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous, with no specialization of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes, without any social obloquy attaching to them, as it does in the caste structure, followed tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration". Majumdar and Madan (1967) rightly comment that, ".....kinship ties, common territory, one language, joint ownership, one political organization, absence of internecine strife have all been referred to as the main characteristics of a tribe". Health related issues of the tribal people are the serious concern in the present era. Tribal people are the highest capital of workforce in India. These men and women of tribal communities are worked hard daily. In the rural areas, they live separately in cluster basis. The picture of rural health in tribal villages are getting worsen. They suffer from various diseases throughout the year and the kind of health services which they are getting that is not satisfactory, although they have local health centre and hospitals. Despite of all barriers they go to rural medical practitioners, qualified doctors, hospital for getting better health care treatment. Media are supposed to play an important role in the context of social change of a society in several ways like, it helps in mental development, it raises aspirations, it creates an environment for development, it helps in making Government policies for development, it helps in developing organization and institution, it enforces social norms, it helps in changing attitudes, it teaches and change society in terms of national development. Media affect the rural people in accordance

with their backgrounds, perceptions, motivations and aspirations. Rural people are mostly affected by the radio and television programmes and advertisements. Media are used to increase the academic abilities, intelligence and health awareness levels of rural people. Mass media can generally be changed the perceptions, thought processes and aspirations, standard of living of the rural human being.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The basic objectives of this paper are (a) to study the impact of media on tribal society (b) to examine what are the social changes are found in tribal society with special references to health. The information has been collected from both primary sources like field study and the secondary sources like books, journals, articles and newspapers etc.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A study has been conducted at village Dhultikuri, a less connected village of Kankalitala Gram Panchyat which comes under Bolpur-Sriniketan Block of Birbhum District, West Bengal. Kankalitala is one of the fifty-one shakti Peethas where the dead body of Maa Parvati was cut by the Lord Shiva and the waist fell at that place. The village Dhultikuri is about 15 km away from Bolpur Railway Station where as 9 km is metal road and 6 km road is flourished by red soil. In this village more or less 450 people are living together where the percentage of the tribal community is 70%. There are two sub caste of tribal's such as 'Santal' and 'Oraon' both the community are living together by segmenting there place side by side in this village. Here, more or less 65 family of 'Santal' and 70 family of 'Oraon' live separately in the same village by maintaining their own value and norms per se. I have gone through the study followed by qualitative research method utilizing the observation, interview techniques to collect the primary data from the village. The study has been taken place between the two tribal community in the same village, taking 15 household from each group as the area of studying the samples.

**OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION.**

The village Dhultikuri is fifteen km away from the main markets of Bolpur. 'Santal' and 'Oraon' are the inhabitant of this village and live separately by maintaining their own norms, customs and values. They live in soil houses which consist of single floor. They keep cows, goats, buffaloes purposively utilization for their own sake. They like to live in nuclear family basis. Every nuclear family has more or less four to six members. In 'Santal' para alias called maji para and 'Oraon' para, needful drinking water facilities are available like having six tube well, more or less four to five ponds are existed. The people of this village do not have proper sanitation facility. Out of one thirty five family, only twenty five families are enjoying electricity. Both of this para have their separate common places where young boys and middle aged men gather for gossiping, reading newspapers watching television, listening news, songs, dramas and sometimes seat together for discussions about serious problematic issues of their village. Communicating with them I found tribal of this village are not using the radio rather than television. Most of the time tribal of this village spend to watch television. Tribal men of this village bear much time to listen the news whereas the tribal women are like to watch the serial, movies etc. In the common place of this tribal village only men are allowed to enter and women are strictly restricted. The tribal people of this village are frequently getting relevant information from different channels such as Government school teachers, ICDS workers, ASHA workers, local people who eventually meet at the markets, Panchayat Pradhan, Government officials who often visit the village and also from the media. Almost all the information is shared from the common meeting place of the village. During the time of research study I realized that tribal people are felt easy to access interpersonal communication as compared to the communication done by the different media devices. Gossiping centre and the Common meeting places are the main information exchanging point of the tribal's, In such places the information can flow through mouth to mouth communication therefore verbal or oral communication are very much effective to promote developmental messages to the rural audience .Most interestingly that I have found, television has set up in the common meeting place of that village. Daily lives of the tribal people are so busy. From the morning to evening tribal men and women work hard either in the agricultural field or in the construction / MNREGA as a daily wage labour. Tribal men and women they do not have enough time to listen or watch or read media like radio, television, newspapers. Despite of all odds most of the tribal people prefer to watch television rather than radio in course of their

spare time. Sometimes tribal men read newspapers in the morning by seating in the common place and tribal women listening radio programmes like song, dramas in the afternoon and evening time, but tribal men and women spend remained time for watching television. Interacting with the tribal people for a long time related to health care treatment, I came to know they are not getting proper medical facilities from the Government health centres. For that reason they usually either go to the local doctors by paying medical fees one hundred to one fifty rupees including medicines for getting better health treatment or going to the named “Sian” hospital which is so far near about seventeen km from their village. Establishing the fruitful rapport with the tribal people, I talked about ethnic medical practitioner. The respondents are answered we have some ethno medical practitioners like witch doctors, tantric, ojha in our village but we first prefer to go to doctors, Government hospital for getting better treatment. In addition to that respondents said if we are not cured by medical treatment provided by the local doctors and Government hospitals, then we visit the ethno medical practitioner houses for worship at last. So, it can analyze that media can break the barrier of cultural superstitions through disseminating the health oriented messages among the tribal’s. In practically, we cannot deny the positive role of the media in tribal development. Media can keep vibrant the tribal communities in all the ways by providing important information about getting better health outcomes and help to bring social change in rural areas.

### CONCLUSION

This study pointed out that the media play very crucial role in terms of getting better health outcomes among the tribal community. The results of this study depicted that instead of taking the help of ethno medical practitioners like witch doctors, tantric, ojha’s for getting better health outcomes, the tribal communities are going to take treatment in general from the rural medical practitioners, qualified doctors, and also from the hospitals, in because of dissemination of health oriented messages scattered by the media. The tribes like ‘Oraon’ and ‘Santal’ are now very much conscious about to be taking care of their own health. The thoughts of the tribal’s community have changed in because of the richness of media very high in rural areas and tribal people are being influenced by the media. In the tribal villages there is a common place where tribal people gather so often for gossiping, reading news papers, watching movies and listening news, share policies and programmes of the government. In few decades before, tribal people

have their own traditional perceptions about taking care of their health care treatment, but now their perceptions has been transformed by the immense effect of media. In earlier, whenever they would suffer from some sort of diseases, they first liked to go to the ethno medical practitioners like witch doctors, tantric, ojha's for getting health care treatment, but now the people of tribal communities are preferred to visit local doctors, hospitals excepting nearest Government primary health centres by saying that no health care facilities are available there. For better treatment, they have to count upon some local doctors and hospitals which are so far from their village. Superstitions are still grabbed the mind of rural tribal's. Hence, media can break the barrier of false believe and bring social change among the tribal community. So, we cannot deny the indirect impact of the media on tribal society and positive role to promote Government health oriented messages dissemination among the tribal groups, which is specially made for them. It is also the duty of media to look upon that either tribal people are getting proper Government health care facilities or not. In this manner, media can act as an instrument of social change particularly in the health sector and work for the well being of the tribal people.

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