

# Folk media as a tool against drug abuse. A study on Hmar people of Dima Hasao, Assam.

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Traditional folk media are sound, visual, and sign language-based indigenous media formats. Folklore, folk tales, dance, song, drama, puppetry, and other forms of traditional folk media exist. Different communities have employed traditional folk media for communication from the dawn of mankind. It arose as a result of the requirements of diverse castes, communities, linguistic, and ethnic groups, and is thus closely linked to grassroots culture and social activities.

The Hmar tribe migrated from China and settled first in Burma, then in Manipur, Mizoram, and Assam's North Cachar Hills, which is known as Dima Hasao. The region is having most problem in drug abuse and unwanted illegal drugs like drinking, local smoke and injecting etc. The research paper is an attempt to find out the effectiveness of folk media, how it can be useful to give awareness and information against drug abuse among the Hmar people of Bulmoul Bagan with population of 160, Umrangsou with population of 76 and Molhoi with population of 83. The study is based on both quantitative as well as qualitative research. The approaches used were quantitative, qualitative, and participatory. The respondent's interview schedule was used to acquire quantitative data. Primary data were collected by questionnaire schedule, Purposive sampling method was used to collect the data.

**KEY WORDS** : Effectiveness of Folk media, Drug abuse, local smoke, Hmar people.

## **Introduction**

In tribal societies, traditional media plays a crucial role in communication. Its unique ability to understand, connect, and bring people together. It becomes more vivid and alluring with the use of its many traditional tools, such as folk media, folk tales, songs, dramas, poems, and writings. Tribal communities are going through a transitional era of adjusting to social change and abandoning old habits with modernity and technical growth like any other community. In a circumstance when there are issues in many different areas, such as alcoholics and drug addicts. It became crucial to educate them using their own traditional folk media so that they could learn more efficiently.

The Hmar people live in small, peaceful communities that are mostly connected by clans. They reside in the majority of the northeast, although a disproportionate number of them reside in Assam's Dima Hasao region.

Earlier, terrorism caused severe damage to this neighbourhood and increased illicit activity and drug misuse. While some improvements have improved society, others have revealed it to be a nation of ills. Tribal society is facing several issues in North-East India, where tribal cultural variety is one of the distinctive elements of its diversity, which is a huge worry for planners, leaders, and the government as well.

After many attempt of making the people aware against drug abuse, HIV, AIDS, smoke, local make alcohol, early child marriage etc, the people of the region are still suffering from the danger of severe drug addiction. Knowingly or unknowingly they are becoming addicted to this all and not only themselves, they are risking the life of their own generation and their society too.

The traditional folk media, with its many varieties, is very beneficial in order to give awareness and produce all conceivable ideas because the majority of the Hmar people live in relatively remote areas where the reach of new media are still lacking today. The locals are competent should be aware that drug addicts and users pose challenges for society's progress. Since traditional folk media plays a role in validating culture, justifying its rituals, and effectively educating masses from rural areas and the uneducated class, it is one of the most trustworthy media in the Hmar civilization. Traditional forms of popular media are crucial weapons for exerting social pressure and social control.

One strategy to embrace new forms of social expression and communication is to evaluate the effectiveness of the conventional media in the shifting social environment of the Hmar community. This analysis can also identify elements that influence the traditional media's popularity or decline. These studies can be beneficial for employing traditional folk media for development, preserving such practises, and reviving tribal societies' traditional cultures, which are rapidly disappearing in the age of globalisation and ICT.

One of the most recognised media in Hmar community is traditional folk media since it helps to validate culture, legitimise rituals, and educate the people from rural areas and the illiterate class. Traditional folk media are also important tools for enforcing social pressure and exercising social control.

### **Literature review**

Folk culture, according to Yedla C. Simhadri in 1992, is the representation and identity of the specific community, describing the community's unique identity and richness. It is significant because it defines its inhabitants. In order for the populace to love their particular tradition, it should always be preserved.

Jai. P. Narain discusses the value of traditional folk media in raising rural people's awareness of drug misuse. Additionally, he stated that the rapid spread of HIV and drugs poses a threat to people, acting as a slow-killing cancer on society.

According to Sudhir Varma, traditional folk media plays a significant part in the change of the populace by informing them in a traditional manner through its varied traditional media, with a greater emphasis on matters relating to HIV and drugs. He asserts that these pose the greatest threat to society since they may kill quickly and easily while not spreading readily. A particular tribe's folk media can be used to easily educate and mobilise the populace.

Prof. K.R. Balan and Dr. C.S. Rayadu discovered in 1994 that traditional media including music, folksongs, and dance have developed into very helpful communication tools in the modern era.

B Sain talks primarily about drug addiction and environmental pollution. He emphasises the problem of society by highlighting the main effects of drug abuse on people. He also explains how traditional folk media can be very effective in changing people's attitudes toward the fight against drug abuse.

In his article "Hmar hai thu le hla, a chankang hmasa, hnuntawl ei ni," Hilliam Riengsete, author of the MIL hmar book of Assam, discusses in detail the literature and dialect of the Hmar people that date back to their inception. He also claims that traditional folk and traditional song are representative of the Hmar people. However, he never made any mention of the value of folk media in raising public awareness, particularly when it comes to using folk media to educate the Hmar community about drug misuse.

Laldena attempts to bring the Hmar people together by highlighting the value of their folktales in his work PUSURA'S PARADOXIC CHARACTER: A RE EXAMINATION. He makes clear mention of the traditional, emphasising traditional folktales in particular. It is a significant piece of academic insurgency that underlined the value of our traditional folk. But he omits to discuss how crucial it is for a given tribe to employ folk media to inform the populace while keeping both the young and old in focus.

Dr. Namita Sharma has written briefly about the HIV/AIDS epidemic, with a focus on the sharp rise in female cases. He notes that women are more at risk than men and that the only way to prevent this is to increase public awareness of AIDS and drug use, even in the most rural areas of the nation. He continues by saying that traditional media will be crucial in teaching and inspiring people.

In addition to discussing many of the difficulties and issues in Asia, Jai. P. Narain claims that drug misuse and AIDS are the two most significant issues that any person may encounter. This should be given top consideration because it is the issue that is ruining our kids today. He also makes mention of the fact that traditional folk media, in all its forms, can be used to inform the public of risks from an early age.

### **Research Methodology**

The study is based on both quantitative as well as qualitative research as it is important to understand the meaning and in depth of the study. The study is focused on the Hmar people's value of traditional folk media practises.

The Hmar people of the Dima Hasao district are subject of the research. There are a total of 5 development blocks, but only 1 of the block and Hebron village is used for the research because there are many Hmar habited people in this village. Total 250 samples were collected from more than 400 people of the village. Simple random sampling was applied to determine the data. Both men and woman are collected for the study. Primary data are collected by Questionnaire tools, personal interview were also held to those who were well acquainted with the topic.

## Findings

One of the most crucial components issues of our study is to know whether the traditional folk media still have an impact on people. The calculation of our findings demonstrates that the traditional folk media has a significant impact on the people of the Hmar community. More than 68% of the total respondents agree, while only 20% disagree, although of those who disagree, 11% are unable to react.

Our next question was whether the people participate in their traditional folk media programmes. The information presented above is crucial because it demonstrates how essential traditional Hmar folk media are now and how they rank among the most crucial components. More than 72% of them engage with or go to their traditional media performance. Only 27% of them do not participate; they may be the least bothered or those who do not want to be too closely associated with their conventional media or festival.

The next questions was a very important one that completely relates our topic ads we asked whether they have ever witnessed any folk performance done by some governmental organisation or NGO. The aforementioned data makes it abundantly evident that the government officials were not responsible for developing the traditional media of Hmar, as it reveals that more than 55% of respondents have never witnessed any folk music or dance organised by government. However, 44% of them concur that they have seen it. These indicate that there is little government involvement with regard to the traditional folk media of the Hmar.

The next questions that we ask as whether any performance on drug abuse related topic was held through the folk medium of Hmar community. The aforementioned information is crucial for determining whether people have ever observed or heard traditional folk media performance on any drug-related topics. 37% of them responded "no," but 62% of them "accepted" and "said yes" in their traditional folk media like SIKPUIRUOI which is one of the biggest harvest festival among the Hmar community.

Keeping the importance of drug abuse our next question was about the potential of folk media in reducing drug abuse. According to the data and report, most respondents felt that traditional folk media, with its variety of forms such dance, theatre, music, and storytelling, has the ability to lower drug abuse. Only 20.2% of them are unable to express their opinions, with 53.6% of them agreeing and 26.2% of them disagreeing.

Our next question was about the result of the information and awareness given through the help of the folk media. According to the data, the majority of respondents agreed that traditional media is more significant and effective than modern media, demonstrating the continued importance of traditional media among the local Hmar population. 32% of them agreed, and 22% of them strongly agreed. Only 7% of them strongly disagree, and 21% of them disagree.

Our next question was the increasing of drug abuse somehow decrease the development of Hmar society. The information above demonstrates that drug misuse is a major issue and a factor in the underdevelopment of the community. Given that 27% of them strongly agreed and 28% agreed, there may be numerous explanations for this. 20% of them agree with it, 10% strongly agree, and 13% are unable to express their opinions.

## Conclusion and Suggestion

As is well known, there are several traditional-related events occurring across society, and the Hmar people of Dima Hasao actively participate in these events. The majority of these people are interested in family gathering customs, followed by a second group who agree to attend community celebrations, and the remaining people, for the most part, are interested in shows featuring professional performers. All of this demonstrates the Hmar people's genuine enthusiasm in participation in all traditional ceremonies, programs, or dances. Whatever the case, it demonstrates their appreciation for traditional media, particularly folk media.

Despite being quite wealthy, many of them proudly have an interest in traditional media, particularly folk media, where they not only take an interest but also actively engage. It is really odd to note that neither the government nor any non-governmental organisations are actively promoting or exposing themselves. More than half of the reporters admitted, based on the statistics, that they had never watched a folk media programming sponsored by the government.

People in the hmar community have also learned that traditional folk media is a crucial instrument for using as a source of communication for any topic. They have stated that traditional folk media is one of the most significant tool, as opposed to television, radio, movies, new media, or social media, to raise public awareness of drug usage.

Traditional media displays their identity by reflecting their tribe's culture; it is who they are. The fact that it is in their own language and can be used to plan a camp for drug abusers is another point on which the respondents are broadly in agreement.

Since there are fewer government initiatives on the functioning of traditional media, Therefore, the ideal medium to spread awareness and motivational messages is the local popular media. However, the government should exercise more caution and plan more activities to Promote the regional folk media and remove them from the risk of all the drug, alcohol, and smoking issues.

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