Chapter III

Traditional Forms of Communication
"In a civilization there is a great tradition of reflective few and there is a little tradition of largely unreflected many-peasant society and culture".\(^1\)

The folk culture includes, the cultural tradition which are oral and are not directly dependent on written records, manuscripts, and books for their existence. The traditional form of communication includes oral tradition, like folksongs, folk tales, myths, riddles and proverbs, tattoos and other aesthetic art forms.\(^2\) These are prominent phenomena in the village society. The mode of communication and dissemination of information is through-word-of-mouth in a traditional society. Oral tradition and folk culture are both considered to be complementary and synonymous with rural society. Since time immemorial the oral tradition has been major source of the preservation of Indian culture. In short, the oral tradition not only expresses the aspirations, values and norms of folk people but also provides them framework to live by.

This traditional folk communication has been an active part of Indian culture, and has been a sub-culture along with elite culture and tribal culture.\(^3\) India has an ancient tradition of oral form of communication. This has been clearly manifested in the classical Vedic Hindu Tradition and is also evident in the contemporary expression of enduring folk culture. The name given to Vedic Literature, as \textit{shruti} and \textit{smriti}, (that is heard and based on memory), itself qualifies the importance of the channel of word of mouth. Hence informal mode of communication was practised and had a major role in keeping the Indian culture continuing through the ages.
The villages' folk societies are still marked by the dominance of oral tradition which is observed not only in India but is also a worldwide phenomena. The concept of 'folk' is used where there is a consciousness by a particular group, society or community of common cultural heritage and have same common traits. The behavioral knowledge of folk society is based on word of mouth and not on written scriptures and the way of life in folk society is simple and less systematized. This is what Mckim Marriot refers to as 'little tradition' which consists of the folk artists, unlettered peasants, medicine men, riddles, proverbs, stories, dances, etc.

The little tradition is prevalent mostly in Indian villages. There is a constant interaction between the great tradition which is embedded in the classical Vedic knowledge and the little tradition. Some elements of folk music have been adopted in the classical music (Great Tradition). Mckim Marriot has shown that festivals like Diwali and Raksha Bandhan have their origin in 'little tradition'. Mckim Marriot has used the terms 'universalization' and 'parochialization' to explain the processes of communication between little tradition and great tradition. The movement of the elements of little tradition like indigenous customs, deities, rites and rituals circulate upwards to the level of the great tradition and are 'identified' with its 'legitimate' forms. This is called 'Universalization'. Parochialisation, is limited in its scope of intelligibility, and is deprived of its literary form. It is reduced to un-systematic and less reflective dimensions of culture. There is a marked continuity from folk to elite culture, as Milton Singer reasons out that "India had primary or indigenous civilization which had been fashioned out of pre-existing folk and regional cultures." In India folk culture has
been an integral part of Indian civilization. There might be variations in rites and rituals which are being institutionalized in a given region. Folk culture has been imbied in larger Indian culture by Indians like Tagore, Jamani Roy and Udai Shanker. These men in their respective fields of music, painting and dance have made an effort to perserve the folk culture of India.

Transmission of communication in folk society is done on direct and personal basis. Thus the factors like caste, kinship and one's position in the social hierarchical structure, influence the nature of interpersonal communication.

Oral communication transmits information which is essential for the survival and maintenance of cultural unity and continuity in the rural society. Hence culture and communication in peasant/folk society are inseparable. In due course of time, folk culture becomes integrated in the complex body of socio-cultural behaviour, which is determined by the regional culture. In the words of Edward T. Hall, it would be right to say that culture is communication in the village society. The qualities of 'little community' such as homogeneity, self-sufficiency, conventional ways of life, common values and ethos render folk societies close knit and also make them dependent on personal relations and interpersonal communication. Hence integration between culture and communication is strong in peasant/folk society.

Communication in the primitive societies not only fulfills the social need, but also fulfills various physiological and survival needs of society. In primitive society, communication maintains and animates life and integrates its traditional knowledge. It runs like a thread linking the past and the present culture through
various legends, lores, poems, and myths. The above given forms of oral communication also constitute the cultural tradition of a given society.

The word tradition comes from Latin word 'traditium' i.e. anything which is transmitted from the past. Tradition as a concept involves various aspects viz. Normative, Legitimization, Identity and lastly Hermeneutic.9

Firstly, Normative aspect involves all the cultural material which is transmitted from one generation to another. This cultural material serves as a normative guide in the sense that certain practices are routinized i.e. actions are performed with little reflection on the method and the rationality of act is not questioned. These actions are justified by reference to their tradition. Thus tradition like Sati, bali (sacrifice), etc. are legitimized under the normative aspect of tradition.

Secondly, provides legitimacy to cultural material and rationality for social actions. Thus tradition provides legitimacy and authority to actions.10

Thirdly, in the Identity aspect, tradition includes a set of assumptions, beliefs and patterns of behaviour handed down from the past. Traditions provide some of the symbolic materials necessary for the formation of identity both at the individual and the collective level. The sense of oneself and feeling of belonging to a culture are shaped according to the varying degrees of dependence on the social values, beliefs and forms of social behavior which are transmitted from the past.

Fourthly, in the Hermeneutic aspect, tradition is viewed as a set of background assumptions, that are taken for granted by individuals in the conduct of their daily lives and which are transmitted from one generation to another. The hermeneutic philosophers such as Heidegger and Gadamer have emphasized, that
all processes of understanding are based on presuppositions, which are a set of assumptions which one takes for granted while performing social action. These set of assumptions form a part of tradition to which one belongs.

**Chief characteristics of Traditional mode of communication**

Firstly, communication in the peasant society is inter-personal through which society is closely linked with its own ethos. The communication is devoid of any employment of technology for dissemination of news and information in peasant society. In fact personal relations are heavily relied in traditional communication.

Secondly, traditional modes of communication are institutionalized in various rituals, *Sanskars*, art forms, music, festivals, chaupal, leisure and so on. The communication is circumscribed by the culture of society in which it operates with its local moorings.

Thirdly, the hierarchies of ascriptive nature, certainly affect the traditional modes of communication in a stratified society. In Indian society there are certain words, used only for upper castes and the association of lower castes with words like *Savarna*, could not be thought of. Thus language serves as an instrument of authority and power over others. In ancient India, Sanskrit was spoken only by upper caste men (primarily Brahmins) while women and the lower castes spoke Prakrit. This implies that the latter were deprived of Sanskritic literature and were culturally dominated by men and upper castes.

Fourthly, the traditional mode of communication exists side by side with the electronic media and is relied more in the village society. In the Sixties, Schramm, Lazarsfield, Katz, Ithiel Sola de Pool have shown in their studies that
mass media and interpersonal communication are complementary and that the two-step flow of communication is an attribute of third world societies, and communication flows from media to individuals who impart their knowledge to others.

In traditional society the mode of communication reflects on its social structure and the ideologies which are suffused in it. This is so because the evolution of communication in the traditional society has been a part of historical process in the past.

**Tracing the development of Traditional Communication**

Communication maintains and subsumes the 'ways of life', in any society, be it, folk or urban. As man developed and became more articulate and organized, they invented language, or symbol systems which were specific to their own culture, and thus exhibited the progress from non-verbal signal techniques of drum beating, whistle and smoke-signals to verbal form of communication as language and later on to art of writing.

In the earlier society makers of the rules and taboos of the traditional communication varied from society to society. After the formulation of rules and norms, over a period of time, they become institutionalized within the traditional societies. In ancient India, *panchs*, kings, *purohits* and other holders of authority became the guardians for controlling the cultural communication as they were the source and the channel of cultural transmission. The content of communication was part of 'cultural capital' which these upper castes monopolised, thus depriving lower castes with the means of mobility and knowledge.
Such institutionalization thus precipitated necessity for the existence of its custodians, of the old collective memories, and the ‘great tradition’ like Sanskritic texts among the ignorant masses. Hence the above said institutions (Priests, Kings, and *Panch* อ) became the centers for religious, symbolic, economic and political power in society. Hence bards, travelling merchants, *Sarpanchs*, dancers and state performers became responsible for transmission of certain kind of knowledge, whereas each had different role to perform. The knowledge and information in traditional society were soon identified with power. Since low access to information was due to lack of physical accessibility to information and availability of alternative source of information, possession of any kind of information or knowledge in traditional society symbolised an ideological power on the rest of the ignorant masses.

Redfield’s definition of folk society is similar to the description of village society. He defined folk society as one where the mobility is relatively less and the ways of life form a single web of inter-related meanings and habits of members, corresponding to the customs and traditions of that society. Any form of communication is culture bound in the village and is in accordance with the caste, the economic status and the position (*Ijjat*) of the individuals in the village. A *Numberdar* (an elite among villagers, generally an upper caste, with property and an honest man) can never abuse in public to avoid subsequent criticism. Such an act might call for his exclusion from the status of *Numberdar* and lessen his popularity. Hence this kind of conduct is avoided as it decreases one’s prestige and honour among the villagers.
Types Of Traditional Communication

In the traditional communication, the ritualistic oral tradition is religious in nature and at the same time it is also a part of recreational activity. Hence to study the changes in traditional mode of communication one needs to separate these modes for heuristic purposes. The different modes of communication in the village can be divided into:

(i) Formal and informal modes of communications, in terms of being institutionalized in social structure and the legitimacy these modes have secured over a period of time.
(ii) Regular and irregular in terms of their occurrence.
(iii) Ritualistic mode of communications, i.e., the channels which are concerned with certain rites and those rituals which are steeped in the great tradition and little tradition of that culture. Leach (1966) had noted that “Ritual, as one observes it in primitive communities, is a complex of words and actions...it is not the case that words are something and the rites another. The uttering of words itself is a ritual.”
(iv) Symbolic form of communication includes, mostly external signifiers and physical expression of an event through symbols which are shared by all in the society. For example, death of one’s father is a private affair but shaving of head is a public non-verbal communication of the tragedy fallen on the individual.
(iv) Recreational forms of communication are those public performances which are staged and enacted by trained artists. These artists frequent the village regularly and are a major source of information about the changes in the
outside world. Thus such performances are appealing to the majority of villagers especially women and younger generation.

Convivial groups and “regular friendly associations” are basically small, personal and primary informal groups which meet after dinner etc. on a specific place and gossip center. “Traditionally most convivial groupings have been brought into being by ceremonial necessities and are small, limited and ritualized”. They form an essential part of social relations. “The diffuse pattern of these convivial groups link together, persons of different caste, status and kinship who are formally set apart” due to their position in social structure.  

**Formal means of Communication**

The formal means of communication in Sikhera are those channels which are considered to be the legitimate and sanctioned mode of communication due to continued practice to transmit the message. The word ‘Formal’ is used because the information is usually about a formal event, or from official source, or that form of communication which is sanctioned by the norms of society. These forms are discussed below in context of Sikhera.

*1. Public Announcements*

Public announcements in village Sikhera are used to inform all the villagers regarding the occasion of a social function like marriage, or birth of a son, or any other happening in the village which has public importance. Sometimes official announcements are made by the Pradhan in the village. This method or way is generally known as ‘Manadi’ by the villagers. Political parties and their
candidates also use this mode of communication on the eve of elections to maximize the voter's turnout.

'Manadi' is performed generally by a particular family in the village belonging to Bhangi caste. For performance of the task Bhangis are paid extra on the occasion of marriage or some other festive celebration. In the village, traditionally this function was performed by Bhaksors. The Bhaksor's traditionally used to repair drums and other instruments made out of hides. They were professional drum beaters and village musicians. Now the villagers prefer to hire the city bands for marriage and other functions. This sort of change affected Bhaksors livelihood negatively as they failed to make two ends meet. Thus, either they have migrated to the city Meerut and joined in city bands or taken up some other work. In the village, there is no Bhaksor residing now.

The process of Manadi involves hiring a Bhangi for Rs. 5.00 to Rs 10.00 who is adept in performing this. The 'manadi' starts from the locality of higher castes i.e. Rajputs, to the lower castes' through middle caste 'locality, and Muslims' locality is the last. The person while making announcement is accompanied by a drum beating man to attract villagers.

2. Ghera

One might compare Ghera to a drawing room in a modern urban house, but its functions are multifaceted. It is not necessarily near the residential area. The Ghera is a place where males of the house retire and socialize. Women are not allowed to come here because of the practise of purdah system and also because it is a taboo for women to visit places where man usually retire. However, it is the
privilege and symbolic right of the high castes. The Ghera has rooms and halls which serve as store house of agricultural goods, grains, and has a place to tie animals. It also has rooms for guests and parking facilities for vehicles like bullock-cart, tractor etc. Ghera also serves as a playground of children in the village.

Ghera serves as a traditional yet symbolic way of communication of one's status in the village. Ghera is more individualistic in comparison to community center like Chaupal. Most of the village politics, rumours, gossips etc. are discussed here. Among the lower castes only Pradhan has his own Ghera.

3. Chaupal

In Sikhera, Chaupal has practically ceased to exist. Surprisingly the reason for its being non-functional was lack of time and will on the part of the villagers in Sikhera to interact with one another.

There was a provision for construction of two Chaupals in Sikhera. But finally the land earmarked for one Chaupal has been donated for the purpose of Junior high school for girls and on the land earmarked for another Chaupal, a temple, has been constructed.

4. Temple

In Sikhera, temple is one of the active modes of institutionalization of cultural communication. Often information regarding festivals, fasts, and conduct of Kathas are provided by the purohit or the priest of the temple who is generally a Brahmin by caste. The villagers have blind faith in auspicious time and days. They mostly consult the purohit before starting any new business, negotiation of marriage, purchasing of vehicle etc. The temple also is a place to socialize for the
villagers. The temple in Sikhera has important role to play in most of the events of all Hindu castes as these are conducted according to the purohit.

There are two temples in the village, one belongs to the Rajputs and the other to the lower castes. As purohit serves the upper castes, the services for the lower castes are rendered by the Bhagats who are chosen from amongst the Bhangis. The middle castes are allowed to enter the upper caste temple which has been built by the money and the land donated by the Rajputs of the village.

The upper castes temple is of Lord Shiva. It is white-washed with lime (chuna) and a saffron flag flies on its top. It has a small courtyard with a plant of Tulsi which is considered sacred, and is also worshipped by upper castes.

Temple denotes not only the seat of the cultural communication but also of power and demarcation or separation of the religious fold of upper castes and the lower castes. It immediately shows the difference between the Sanskritic Hindu tradition of the uppercastes and the tradition of the untouchables. The untouchables are not allowed to enter the upper caste temple since it is believed that they would defile the temple by their impurities. The exclusion of untouchables to use the temple of upper castes, shows that the uppercastes still possess hold over religious power, though their power has diminished in political and secular affairs. Similarly there is change in the role of purohit. This is so because now purohits from towns are also visiting Sikhera to conduct rituals, khathas, for consultation of birth charts (Janam Patri) etc. Hence with alternative and accessible source of information, the power of local purohits over religious-ritual matters has decreased.
The formal modes of traditional communication have existence and continuity since time immemorial and it is the common factor found in Indian villages. They serve the purpose of dissemination of news, current information and are a network for the continuity of the cultural patterns (traditions) in a village. They maintain and replicate the structural pattern through the exclusion (like lower castes, women) or inclusion (of upper castes, men) in their activities. The lower castes are not allowed in the temples of the upper castes and hence are deprived of knowledge and information about many cultural-religious events which they may not know otherwise. However, this has changed now for the reasons stated above. Frequent visits to towns and education have brought change in their way of praying, lifestyle, and world-view.

THE INFORMAL MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

1. Wells

In Sikhera there are eight wells out of which some are in lower castes' localities. There are four tubewells in the village out of which one belongs to a lower caste. Besides wells and tubewells, many watertaps have been in-stalled in almost all localities under drinking water scheme.

Wells in Sikhera as in other Indian villages are separated according to caste lines. Upper castes and lower castes have separate wells, tubewells and watertaps. Lower castes are not allowed to use wells and watertaps which are used by upper castes. Similarly the taps in lower castes localities are in no case used by upper castes as they are considered to have been made impure by them. A recent incident in the house of my informant Ravindra Kumar Singh, a Rajput portrays the attitude of upper castes towards the lower castes. In July 1996, one day in the afternoon one child of Ravindra Kumar Singh's family while
playing drank water from a tap installed in the locality of untouchables. When it was brought to the notice of elders in the family, the child was scolded and forced to take bath before entering the kitchen to have food. Even though the daughter-in-law in the house, who is a graduate and hails from town was not much affected by the incident, but the rest of the members of the family were ruffled because of this incident. Thus continuation of such superstitious beliefs and thoughts is still a reality in the village, despite the passing of the Untouchability Act, many decades back.

Since untouchables cannot use other taps in the village except those installed in their own locality, this constitutes a bone of contention between upper and lower castes. Wells were important meeting ground for women of villages. Besides, the big gaps (holes) made in the courtyard through the mud walls to talk, the well was another favourite place for women to exchange notes about their own homes and neighbours' homes. Generally in the mornings and evenings women used to gather to draw water. It was also a place to admonish, comment, slander anybody else. While drawing water, Brahmins and Rajputs were among the first to draw water.

An interesting incident was recalled by an old Brahmin about how caste rules kept changing regarding purity and pollution. The narrator as a young boy of about four to five years, while playing, drank water from Dhimar's earthen pot. An elderly Brahmin went and complained to other Brahmins. The members of the Brahmin community immediately summoned a meeting and young Brahmin was called for. An informal decree was passed that water from Dhimar's and milk from Khatik's vessels and hands, is permissible to drink by upper castes.

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Thus wells played a significant role in communication in the village earlier and are still serving an important role in the village society. Such incidents often serve to exhibit the importance given to the taboos and social norms in village and serve to control any deviance from social norms.

2. Nai Shop

Out of all the service castes Nai had always played an important role in the cultural life of villagers. He was always allowed inside the house and could sit on the same cot as his patron. The responsibility of searching a marriage-match for patron’s children partly on him, besides village purohit. I came across many folksongs sung during marriages which referred to this aspect. Formerly Nai catered to separate households under Jajmani system. Nai still visits some Rajput’s households for services like shaving, hair cutting, massaging men folk in lieu of grains (during harvest season) and cash during festivities in the household. Now one barber has opened a shop and caters to every one irrespective of caste due to decrease of patronage and commercialisation going on in the village. This is major center for communication since Nai caters to all castes and people who come at the shop chat while waiting for their turn. The young Nai Munna (23 years) told me that his shop is so popular that even upper caste men visit it. He also told me that out of respect to their upper caste status, Munna uses new blade to shave them. This shows that distinction of caste still matters in social relations.

3. Confectionery Shops

Mostly kids and ladies frequent these shops. Earlier there was only one confectionery shop. Now two more have been opened due to increase in demand of consumer goods in Sikhera. These shops are frequented by all villagers to buy
eatables, shops, household items etc. These shops also serve as meeting points and communication centers since all villagers visit them to purchase goods.

4. Convivial Groups

As men gather to talk or gossip in Ghera, roads, and other meeting places, the women have to be satisfied with small social groupings. Mostly women of upper castes chat at home and share their household problems. Women gather in their neighbouring courtyards, after men leave for their day's work. Some of them often meet, to stitch, knit or embroider while chatting. They discuss jewellery, clothes, problems related to family, children, spouse and often gossip about neighbours' new daughter-in-law. I observed that most of the courtyards had small peeping holes through which women exchanged messages. Some times milk, curd, butter are shared among neighbours. This channel of communication is important since it exchanges news about the village and also becomes the source of information for the women folk. Most of the women of upper castes hardly ever frequent outside to work, or to gather dung cakes (Upala) or get firewood for hearth. This is done by Khatik, Dhimar or the untouchable caste (Chamar) women. Lower caste women often chat, while collecting fuelwood, water and also making dung cakes.

The Khatik, Dhimar, and Kumhar are slowly changing their ways of life and their women are withdrawing from the outside world, much like upper castes' women. Most of the women in the sample survey who belonged specially to Dhimar, Khatik, Kumhar, and Muslims denied that they went to work outside their houses. This is so because it is only among the lower castes that women ventured
out, which is not considered honourable among upper castes. Thus the process of horizontal mobility and Sanskritization is clearly visible in the village.

Amongst the women of upper castes, some are well known for spreading rumours. When I had gone to visit the village, I was sitting in the residential house of the former Pradhan. Within minutes I had many spectators mostly women aged twenty years and above, along with young children. This shows that the communication network is quite strong in the village even without mass media among women. The awareness among women is increasing due to the use of radio, TV and magazines also. This is evident from the fact that women are aware of the events happening outside the village also. The contents of their conversation now include subjects like divorce, love marriage, politics etc. which were not discussed by women previously.

In the village I realized that the most mobile and quick way of disseminating news and information was through children. Messages were conveyed by women to menfolk in the Ghera through their children and vice-versa.

Thus the informal channels of traditional communication provide a network which fulfills the needs of the community according to its cultural ethos. These structures continue to play a major role in traditional society like Sikhera, despite the presence of mass media. This is so, firstly because of the trust reposed in traditional methods of communication. Marriott, and D.N.Majumdar have shown that villagers trust the information received from known and respectable person rather than from an unknown person. Even in times of need a respected person like a Thakur, Pandit, Patwari, or Nai is trusted more than the Indian Postal Service or
All India Radio. Secondly, these channels of traditional communication have cultural legitimacy and fit into cultural pattern and give villager a feeling of unity with their community (*Biradiri*).

**Ritualistic Communication:**

Ritualistic Communication is an important form of traditional mode of communication. This fact is obvious during the rites as birth initiation, marriage and death etc. It is also related to the religious beliefs and expressed in form of *Jagaran, Kathas* and *Keertans* during certain auspicious times and festivals like Navratras, Budha Purnima, etc.

Rituals are very often symbolic in nature. General and special customs usually involve a physical action (food, fruit, milk offering), a shared belief (in traditional deity) and a material object (the silver coin, *yantra*, idol). "Customs that have acquired considerable magical and sacred potency are known as rituals. 17 They symbolize transition from one phase of life to another and they are social at the same time. 18 This is primarily to give social recognition and legitimacy to the rites by making them public. The mode of behavior of the person who has undergone a rite with the other people of community, undergoes change e.g. after marriage the girl wears red vermillion, *Upanayana Sanskar* is a sort of declaration that the twice-born boy is of marriageable age (M.N. Srinivas 1968. Basham 1972). Hence through group interaction, in these functions and festivals people are made aware about the happenings in one’s family.

*i) Festivals*

Calendric festivals are those which arrive yearly like Holi, Diwali, Rakshabandhan, Goverdhana, Pooja etc. A list of these has been given in
Appendix-2. These are national festivals but are mostly celebrated along with local variations. Beside these festivals, there is strong integration of village local culture in the little traditions. There are some festivals which are related to the little tradition of Sikhera, like Gugga Naumi or Jaharvir Naumi. I observed that there is yearly ‘Mela’ or fair held in reverence of Jaharvir during monsoon in the month of Bhadon. The Jogis of Sikhera are disciples of Gorakhnath and are well versed in caretaking the customs and preserving the sanctity of shrine of Jaharvir. Jaharvir is worshiped by Muslims and all the Hindu castes.19

In Sikhera, there is another important cultural centre which has been imparting knowledge about Bhagvad Gita and is about the attainment of God on Neo-Vedantic lines. There is a Sahaj Rajyoga Pathshala established by Jai Bhagavan Verma who is Sunar (Goldsmith) by caste and postman by profession. His whole family is involved in this. His 11 year old daughter and 22 years old son also give practical knowledge about yoga, how to lead a healthy life and being a good moral human being. Though this work is not hereditary but he has been continuing it. There are separate timings for females and males. Special consideration is given to people who are working outside the village. Besides giving philosophical and spiritual discourses they also disseminate knowledge about everyday matters like keeping oneself and houses clean, about hygiene, harmonious social relations, equality and maintainence of the fraternity in the village. They also informally teach some housewives to read and write in the late afternoons.

ii) Marriage

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Marriage is an important channel of social communication. Nai performed a special role as matchmaker in earlier times. Nai functioned like a marriage bureau or marriage advertisement in newspapers. The Nai carried news far and wide to the different villages to which they catered. Due to the practice of hypergamy and exogamy in Indian castes, the village where marriages were settled, were far off from Sikhera. This created a network of relationships and channels of communication which became institutionalised through marriage, over a period of time. The marriage was settled by elders, in consultation with the Pundit and Nai.

Marriage is still considered a matter of much importance and celebrated with fanfare and publicity. The whole family and community came from far and wide to gather for the ceremonies like marriage. The village solidarity is re-inforced as all the castes involved in the process offer and give help much before the actual marriage ceremony. If it is the marriage ceremony of a village girl, no villager of any caste eats food with members of the bridegroom’s party (Barat).

iii) Temple

Besides being a formal means of communication, temple acts as a center stage of information about important cultural events and is a major ritual site. Infact it excercises great influence over the social structure and social relations, especially in a closed village community. The temple is a place of worship where rituals like puja, kirtans, religious jhanki (exhibition) on Janmastami (birth day of Lord Krishna are held). Besides community prayers and ceremonies, special rituals like mundan etc. are also performed in the temple.
Temple is also a source for communication and information important religious festivals, special *puja*, or *vrat* (fast) worship to be done for the reason of *Graha shanti* (i.e. planet/star appeasement) or for prevention of some disease, or offerings and prayer for the birth of a son and so on. The temple maintains genealogy of the families residing in the village. The *Purohit* is traditionally consulted by the whole village community about auspicious time for taking decisions to buy land, animal or vehicle or to sow seeds in fields. Thus Astrology also plays an important part in maintenance of traditional culture and ideological order.

Temple culture in India, resists any form of social change. The authority of the temple is asserted by the pundits through the interference in every day affairs of villagers. For example any act, which is considered ritually polluting can call for exclusion from temple entry. Thus marrying in low caste, may lead to individual's expulsion from one’s family and/or caste even in these democratic times.

Pundits being high castes attempt to maintain social and moral code of conduct by enforcing belief in religious customs and practices. Thus any deviance in this regard not only gives them an opportunity to reassert their role as guardians of society but also provides them with a tool to divide the society and rule over it.

*iv) Nahan*

Nahan literally means having a dip in water. In Sikhera, villagers go to Garh Mukteshwar Ganga which is about 25 Km from Sikhera for nahan on *Kartik purnima*. This is an important religious event and an occasion for social interaction. Even the women of the upper castes take a dip with men in Ganga. It
is a joyous event when only the elders remain behind to look after the village. This can be described as a picnic, camping and swimming at river side. It also has religious significance attached to it. The villagers specially go for ablutions in Garh Mukteshwar Ganga. They are accompanied by women folk and children. This is a major event because even relatives and villagers' daughters married and living in other villages also come home along with their family and friends and go to Garh Mukteshwar Ganga with villagers. Hence it is an occasion for social meeting and a family reunion with religious hue.

Most of the upper castes, Brahmins and Rajputs go in tractor trollies. They take with them daily rations like rice, dal and spices and cook food for themselves on the banks of the Ganga. People make flower offerings along with sweets and diyas and take a dip in the holy river, since it is a Hindu belief that, Ganga washes away all the sins of the bather due to its inherent divine character. On this occasion a grand mela (fete) is held on the banks of Ganga. Shops of food, household goods, ornaments, bangles, and toys are installed in the mela. Various games, giant wheels, the magic shows and circus are also arranged. This mela is so important that the District Magistrate declares two days' local holidays on this occasion.

v) Puranic rites

The rites and rituals prescribed by Puranas are called Puranic rites. They also make use of Vedic Mantras. Each rite is performed for a specific occasion and is related to various Puranic deities. Some occasions like Navratra i.e. period of nine days in Kwar(October) and Chait(April) are marked by Bhagvati Jagran, in
which recitation of *mantras* is carried on for nine days and nights without any break. *Bhagwati Jagran* is a public function held at the house of one whose wish has been fulfilled or who wants to pray for something. People keep fast and worship Durga (Mother Goddess) and also sow barley in a pot which is symbolic of Goddess Durga herself. They burn cow dung cakes (*Upala*) with clove in front of Durga's idol. In the temple people recite the Ramayana and Gita in a relay manner.

*Maha Shivaratri* is another religious festival which has a social aspect attached to it. On this day Ganga *Jal* (water of Ganga river) is taken to special 'Sidha peeth' in Kavads. The *Kavad* is a small bamboo basket with colourful decoration for carrying Ganga Jal. They are not placed on ground and are carried by *Kavadias* (men who take Kavad) on shoulder. *Kavadias* travel mostly on feet. Special *pandals* or camps are put on way by the upper castes or the rich people for the rest and convenience of *Kavadias* and they are provided with necessary amenities. When *Kavadias* reach their villages, the whole village community gears up to receive them.

Some of the rituals which are culture bound have a folk-logic or belief behind them. For example in the ceremony of *Kanchhedan* or *Nakchhedan* (ear-piercing and nose piercing), the belief behind the piercing is that it increases the fertility of females and males as it presses certain nerves related to fertility. In males it is the right ear which is pierced. The ear piercing of males is an age old tradition in Rajputs and in some other castes though the practice has been abandoned in recent years. The girls have both ears pierced and the left lobe of
their nose is pierced. In the Rajput community, the nose ring is symbolic of virginity and only after marriage, the girl is allowed to replace the ring with any other nose ornament or pin. This is evident in Sikhera too. All the young Rajput girls wear a nose ring, though when asked about the reason they said it was a custom.

Most of the rituals observed in Sikhera were associated with nature or agricultural products like wheat, rice and other grains. In Sikhera, 'Dasootan' ceremony takes place after ten days of birth of a child. In the ceremony of Anna Prashan' when for the first time child is fed with rice and milk after six months of birth,20 a special silver bowl and spoon are used. Similarly in a marriage ceremony, rice flakes are given and use of haldi (turmeric) powder, which has purifying and antiseptic effect is made. These ceremonies show that village culture and customs are related to nature and agricultural economy.

During Sakat, pooja is performed with rice grains and sweet potatoes. In this ritual mostly food offerings like wheat, rice, potato and fruits are given. The colors which are used during ceremony also have special significance attached to them, for example yellow signifies auspiciousness and red signifies gaiety and festivity. The ritual activities themselves are related to natural environment. Havan is considered as a means to appease God. It is believed that the fire accepts the offerings on behalf of deities. Various ingredients used in havan or Yagna such as 'Samagri', which are ghee, water or camphor, purify the surrounding environment. The ritual of Havan is accompanied by Mantras (Chants) to invoke certain deities to help mankind. This not only shows the developed ecological nature of folk
customs and rituals but it also highlights the underlying dependence of village life on agriculture. Similarly cow worship also shows the importance of economy of folklife. Thus Hindus not only abstain from eating cow meat (beef) but also worship it.

Rituals fulfill socio-psychological functions in any society, modern or traditional. In a traditional society they are representations of the structural complementarity and cultural unity. W.I. Lyod Warner explains that "these ceremonies assemble the community and give it a symbolic identity". Moreover, as Mary Dougles, following Durkheimian tradition elaborates that, "Traditional societies tightly restrict the individual with religion that ritualizes every action of everyday life and give no leeway for choice under threat of taboos, pollution, and severe penalties for sin". This is clearly applicable to the village society.

The rituals and ceremonies are used to bring the whole village together by involving everybody in some way or the other. Every one's role has been ascribed over the ages according to one's caste. The religio-cultural symbols and stories related to each caste are transmitted from generation to generation. They give a plausible framework for villagers to associate and interact with each other. The traditional modes of communication which are ritualistic in nature are generally socio-cultural. Thus Kathas, Jagrans, marriages, Melas, Havans, Nahans and Kavads are all religious events which are practiced by the whole village.

vi) Harikatha

Various village studies done by Singer, Vatuk, Wadley, Damle on Harikatha have shown that Harikatha is an important mode of communication and is used for dissemination of information and news. Now it has been recognized by the
Government as a channel for spreading its ideas of social welfare. For example in the advertisements of family planning, the style of narration of Harikatha is used. Singer, defines “Harikatha as a kind of concentrated drama, a mono-drama in which one gifted actor enters swiftly a whole series of characters and manners”. 23

Literally Harikatha means story of God. Dr.Y.B.Damle has done a study of Harikatha as an institution in Mahararastra. He considers Harikatha as ‘a wielding force for a social structure torn by inequalities of caste differences’. According to Damle 24 ‘Harikatha is a kind of discourse involving many chhands and songs composed in many languages which involves a sequential performance with dramatic delineation’. Harikatha is identified with synonyms like Katha Patha, Kirtan, and Pravachan. Milton Singer calls these as “cultural performances” and they became his units of observation which he used to understand the interaction between little and great tradition. These performances included prayers, ritual recitations, rites and ceremonies, which according to Singer were religious and ritualistic rather than being cultural or artistic performances. Plays are usually based on sacred epics and Puranas and the concerts are full of dances and devotional songs. The religious rituals involve the use of musical instruments, songs and dances which are similar to those used in the concerts performed by cultural artists. The stories narrated in these pravachans are mainly those of Raja Harischandra, Rama and Sita, Krishna, Arjuna, and Bhakta Prahlad. Despite the repetition of these old traditional stories, the villagers are still eager and enthusiastic to watch and listen to them again and again. On the walls of houses of Rajputs, Brahmans and Sunars, the characters and scenes from the
mythological texts are painted with white rice paste. The themes of these cultural performances are *Puranic*.

The distinction between formal/informal, ritualistic/symbolic, Ballads/songs and proverbs is not exclusive. They overlap each other as ritualistic, symbolic and formal means of communication at the same time. For example, ballad songs are symbolic, which describe victory of good over evil or encourage the men to deal with the tyranny of nature calmly like death, famine etc (like that of Raja Harishchand). Agriculture in India is itself ritualistic and even modes of cooking are ritualistic\(^{25}\) and symbolic both.

The temple and the house have been described as cultural-stages by Milton Singer. Other places, besides temple and house, are the pilgrimage centres which are central to the performance of rituals. These are the 'Maths', or temples and shrines of local deities. In Sikhera, the local deity Jaharvir, which is identical to famous folklore of Gugga\(^{26}\) has a *Math* 1 Km. away from the village. According to the legend Jaharvir was a descendent of Prithvi Raj Chauhan and is considered to be 'Vir' which literally means courageous and chivalrous. There is another *Math* of Mattar Baba who also was a Rajput, and was brave enough to fight Britishers and is believed to have unparalleled physical strength. These two local deities have been institutionalized and form an integral part of local culture. Jaharvir and Mattar Baba are worshipped along with other Puranic and Mythological deities like Ram, Krishna, etc., because of their strength and vitality and by virtue of being ancestors of Rajputs. There is strong tradition of worshiping one's own ancestors in primitive society, especially before going to war or when confronted with crises.
RECREATIONAL FORMS OF TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION

Recreational forms of traditional communication are integral parts of religious performances which also have symbolic significance in study of folklore. This has moved oral traditions towards a performance oriented perspective (Bauman 1978). Folk theatre, fairs and meals and caste meetings and jati sabhas thus gain great importance in traditional communication.

i) Folk Theater

Folk theater in India has been associated with the social and cultural needs of the rural communities. Performances of folk theater in rural India, came in many variations, like Ram-Lila, Nautanki, Jhanki, and Sangs. A very distinguishing feature of folk theater is mobility and ability to communicate with a village community on a local level. There is a strong sense of association between the performers and the audience who are aware of each other's social ethos and milieu, which is in total contrast with mass media. In these performances most of the actors belong to Sikhera or nearby villages. Thus a rapport exists between actors and the audience. This makes the performances lively and also portrays village life more authentically.

ii) Ram Lila

Ramlila in Northern India is a distinct socio-religious and cultural event. It is an annual performance held during Dashahara celebrations. The actors enact the whole life-story of mythological hero Lord Ram as recited in the epic Ramayana or Tulsi Das's Ram Charit Manas or Radhaey Shyam Ramayan. This play continues for ten days and nights. The whole village participates in the celebrations of Dashahara with great enthusiasm. While performing Ramlila actors
wear elaborate dresses and headgears. Actors are given gifts and liberal donations by the whole community. Hein Norwin in his study of the Ramilia, elucidates that this event is the mixture of piety and joyous celebration. It also symbolizes victory of good over evil. The performances of Ramilia symbolise the good and bad aspects of human nature, and impart other social messages through the story of Lord Ram. The Ramilia also has an educating effect on the people and it also helps in the preservation of culture. The story of Lord Ram has not lost its appeal over centuries and is still very popular with the young and old alike.

iii) Nautanki

It is akin to Ramilia but the themes chosen in Nautanki are social rather than religio-cultural. Nautanki is a folk skit or play. Nautanki is derived from the word ‘Natika’ in which there is buffoonery and comedy along with the story on folk themes. Stories of Raja Harish Chandra, Bhakt Prahlad, Prithvi Raj Swayambar, Rani Tari, Laila Majnu and other historical or romantic heroes are enacted. Most of the performers are from the low castes of the same village or surrounding villages. In Sikhera, wealthy Rajputs organised Nautanki before 1950 but presently they are rarely organised. During my discussion, villagers among 30-50 years preferred to watch Nautanki but not the younger generation. This is so because the older generation is still nostalgic about old means of entertainment.

iv) Alha

Alha means war ballad. The name Alha is derived from 12th century Rajput hero of the name Alha. They are about war stories of ancestors of Rajputs ‘Alha, Udhal’ who are believed to be a descendants of Prithvi Raj Chauhan and were noted for their courageous deeds. Alha generally deals with vivid
descriptions of war. These are sung by Bhats in the rainy season, i.e. Sawan-Bandhon (July-Sept.). The Alhas sung at present are based on Jagnik’s book in Dingal dialect entitled ‘Alhakhand’, thus celebrating the courageous acts of brothers. This book contains a number of songs which are available in three dialects: Bundelkhandi, Rajasthani, and Avadhi. However in Sikhera, and neighbouring villages Bhats sing these ballads in Rajasthani.

The ballad of Jaharvir is also very famous in the village and is liked by all the villagers. Jaharvir is same as “Gugga”, a legendary hero. These stories are mythological and are about a hero who fought against enemies like Muslims and Britishers to save their homeland and their honour and dignity. The Rajputs in village usually associate themselves with such stories. These stories serve the purpose of uniting the clan during hardships. Hence the social function of such ballads was to keep alive the inherent qualities like sacrifice for honour and courage to bear hardships.

During the discussions with Bhats, I was told that they served Rajput families of five villages in western UP. They claim to be originally from Rajasthan. In earlier days the Bhats were close associates and courtiers of the king of Alwar. They visit the village yearly in Sawan-Bhandon. They sing the genealogy of each Rajput family of Sikhera. Their singing is accompanied by instruments like sarangi and Dhapli. They are allowed to sit on the cot and are offered wheat, rice, ghee and other harvest products after the performance. The quantity for each family is fixed according to wealth and status of the Jajman. ²⁹

Bhats also had another function of tracing the genealogy of each house. They keep account of death and birth in a family. In earlier times census and
official registration system was not prevalent in India, hence Bhat's maintained the
record about lineage of every family. Also Rajput families were dependent on bards
for their social prestige in the society, as in the village Bhat's often narrate through
poetry the stories of valour, wealth and honour of particular members of the family
of Rajputs. The Bhat's were considered status symbols according to the villagers
since they visited only affluent and upper castes in Sikhera. In many disputes, the
courts have made judgements on the basis of Bhat's records. Thus the records of
family genealogy had legal implications also.

One thing common in the mythological performances and ballads
and epics is that they have borrowed themes from the great tradition and
Sanskrit texts. Thus this is a process of parochialisation. The mention of
Ramayana and Mahabharata in ballads is made to legitimize the stories and
enhance the truth in them, "Mythological continuities of this sort indicate the
existence of a reservoir of ideas, beliefs, and values shared by both the Sanskrit
great tradition and little tradition of the Hindu peasantry" (Lapoint).

v) Sang

Sangs are the professional performing troupes of acrobats. In Hindi it
literally means putting up an act i.e. they perform an act. Sang is about showing
unimaginable acts, like walking on hot coals, or standing and walking on rope and
walking on tall bamboo stalks. They sometimes use animals like monkeys or bears
to perform antics with them. Sangis sing, dance and put up skits in the village.

While visiting Sikhera, they generally stay with lower castes like Khatiks, Dhimars
and Chamars. Sangis do not identify themselves with any caste of the village and
call themselves sangis. These folk artists are especially called at local fairs,
festivals, or at times of weddings, birth of sons etc. Their income comes in form of donations and gifts by the villager who invites them. Now they come once in three years. They have also shifted to other means of livelihood like working as labourers, or performing on various functions in the cities. This has made their frequency of visiting Sikhera low. The skills and acts of the sangis are admired by villagers but these people are believed to have low morals and ethical values on account of which villagers avoid to socialise with them.

They are popular among Children; but elders also enjoy their antics. Women are often not allowed to see sang as it is supposed to have evil effect on them. However except for Rajput and Brahmin women, the lower caste women watch the sang performances in large numbers because it is not a taboo for them.

Fairs and Melas

Fairs and Melas are integral parts of folk culture and are related to religious festivals and social functions. There are fairs associated with various solar and lunar movements viz. on Amavasya (no moon) or Budh Poornima (full moon) or on festivals like Dashahara and Diwali. The fairs are normally associated with popular beliefs or superstitions, like the Kumbha Mela based on the popular belief that a dip in the holy water at Kumbha negates the sins of seven births. These fairs give village community an opportunity to establish new contacts, renew their old friendships, exchange views on various socio-political matters and participate in group activities like community singing or folk games. A number studies have been conducted on the social importance of fairs by sociologists. Sinclair Stevenson has drawn attention towards the study of fairs and festivals of Kathiawar in Gujarat. A.C.Mukerjee has studied the fairs in Bengal and UP.
George Briggs, Stephen Fuchs, and Oscar Lewis have elucidated the continued importance of fairs. The fairs are associated with the economic, social and cultural needs of the community. They provide the local and outside artisans outlets to sell their products.

Sikhera village has its own special fairs. On every Thursday there is a local Paith or local folk market where outsiders or villagers trade in plastic goods, utensils, clothes, cosmetics ornaments and other things of daily use. The fairs are generally held on the barren land towards North-east corner of village. Villagers especially women, come in large number to buy goods since this is the only market where they have an easy access to clothes and other household goods. Otherwise men usually buy household commodities from town.

Another major fair is Jaharvir Mela which is held in the village once a year. Since Jaharvir is considered as local deity whose benign spirit protects the village, the Mela assumes great importance. During the festival time Jogis worship him, roam around the village carrying with them a stick which is the symbol of Jaharvir to get alms and contribution. Mythology of Jaharvir or Gugga is presented orally in the lunar month of Bhadon in Sikhera. It is enacted in night along with pooja. A special tent is erected to accommodate villagers who enjoy the story even though they have heard it many times before. They eat the prasad and socialise with each other on this occasion. People give 'Jat' - or offering, when their wish is fulfilled and they are given Prasad of sweets (Batasha) and Gudchana (jaggery and gram) in return. Shops are arranged nearby the temple. The shops have eatables, icecream, etc., and swings are also arranged for recreation of children. Mostly villagers come in large numbers to visit Jaharvir's shrine.
The importance of fairs lies in their being a purchasing ground of household products and other new products which are easily made available to villagers. This is true for Sikhera, where population is largely dependent on such fairs and Melas for their subsistence and meeting socio-economic needs. This also serves purpose of socialisation and provides a break for villagers from routine life.

**Caste-meetings and Jati Sabhas**

Caste Meetings have been precipitated in Sikhera due to increased politicization of castes. They are emerging as a dominant feature in Sikhera, where strong dividing lines exist between some groups of Dalits and upper castes. The dispute about installation of a statue of Ambedkar in Sikhera, the details of which have been given in chapter II, had led to formation of sub-groups even among Dalits as Balmikis and Khatiks sided with Rajputs in this dispute. Occasionally intra-caste or inter-caste issues also led to dispute in the village. Thus there may be a dispute between two Rajputs or two Brahmins or two Jatavs or between a Rajput and a Brahmin or between a Jatav and a Balmiki. On such occasions caste meetings or Jati Sabhas are held and gain importance. The upper castes hold such meetings openly at their houses, but generally Dalits feel insecure against upper castes' power and hold meetings informally in their houses to express their solidarity and to decide further course of action, particularly when dispute between members of upper castes and lower castes is on some sensitive issue. This can also be termed as “repressive communication”. These in-group meetings, thus serve to unite and organise respective castes by communicating present situation to its members and making them aware of rights and needs of their respective communities.
Symbolic Communication (Folk Beliefs and Customs)

Symbolic communication is an essential element of traditional form of communication in a peasant society. The content of communication includes use of symbols, colors, objects like art of tattoos and rural motifs. These signify certain messages to the society. According to Blumer (1969) human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings those things have for them. Thus, any non-verbal communication in which an object or act conveys a message through culture bound symbols, is referred to as symbolic communication. Symbolic communication also represents definite state or existence like a shaved head means death in family, or a white saree worn by woman shows that she is a widow. Thus Indian tradition has always been rich in symbols.

These symbolic communications were represented from prehistoric times through art, sculpture, coins, vessels, the Pashupati, the dancing girl, a statue of man etc. which represent the culture and tradition of Indus valley civilization. Thus art, music, clothes, colour, charms, ornaments, srngar (beautification), magical spells, etc. are all integral parts of symbolic communication. Symbolic communication is peculiar and contextual in a close traditional system. In a traditional society, symbolic communication imparts implicit information to others and simultaneously re-inforces self-image. Gumpert (1975) described this type of communications as ‘Uni-communication’. This is projected through objects of clothing, adornments and personal possessions, like houses, automobiles, house furnishings and so on. The acquisition of these articles reinforces the self-image in society.
Dipanker Gupta rightly remarks about Indian society that differences in marriage rites, jewellery, dress and other factors, which are neutral to notions of purity-pollution, are adhered to rigidly by different castes. This is done, not to show their superiority among the castes, but to emphasize the difference amongst them. Similarly the process of exchange of gifts or denial of it also communicates one's status and position in the social structure of the village. Thus Boniyas do not accept pucca food from Dhobi, Bhangi, Kumhar, Khatik to show their superiority over these castes. The excommunication of lower castes is expressed by making them stay in south of village. Hence to a spectator these rules communicate the high/low status of different castes on the hierarchical scale of social structure.

To have a deeper understanding of the functioning of symbolic communication in a village, one has to take account of three levels of verbal and non-verbal communications. Levels of symbolic interactions find expression in:

(i) dress, colour, type of ornaments and adornments used by the people of the village i.e. uni-communications.

(ii) music, riddles, sayings, and proverbs

(iii) rural aesthetics, ritual arts and drawings, tattoos.

**Uni-communications**

1) *Dress*

In a village, where the concepts of pollution and purity govern the social interaction, the dress code becomes an important way of knowing to which caste the individual belongs. Since this was transmitted from one generation to another within the caste, it became the part of identity and tradition for that caste. Dress
code was different for both males and females in accordance to their castes which was rigidly followed in Sikhera.

**Males**: The dress of the males includes *Dhoti, Kurta, Topi* (Nehru style), *bundi* (Jacket). At present villagers who work in town wear pants and shirts. Generally men prefer to wear pyjamas rather than pants. They do wear *pagri* (turban) but mostly when one entertains guests or goes out of village.

There are variations in wearing these dresses according to caste. Brahmin man would wear a *janeu* (a thread worn only by twice born after *Upnayan Sanskar*) across the shoulder to abdomen. This thread is symbolic of the person's belonging to a high caste. The variation in the strands is according to caste. Brahmin has to wear 9 twisted strands made out of cotton. Kshatryia would wear 3 twisted strands made out of hemp and Vaishya would wear *janeu* made out of wool. These days there are only three strands because the threads are bought from market rather than made in the house and all the upper castes wear the same type of *janeu*.

Hence anybody wearing thread in the village is considered as unpolluted and belonging to upper caste. The Brahmin men often apply sandal wood paste or a dot (*Bindi*) on their forehead. They would wear wood sandals (*Kharau*) and they tie turban when they leave Sikhera to visit far off places. The Kshatriya would also wear *Kurta-Dhoti/Pyjama* and turban and may apply a *tilak* of vermillion and rice when going out of house to far off places. The *pagri* (turban) is tied in different styles with the loose end hanging till the shoulders. The Bania dresses up similarly and though they wear a round *topee* with some embroidery of *jari* (gold-thread)
work. A few decades back, the Harijans could not wear chappals or sit in front of upper caste people. This custom was prevalent due to economic dependency rather than for cultural or social regions, but it communicated the lower caste status of the person concerned.

Formerly the middle castes were allowed to wear *Kurta* or *Bundi* (vest) made out of cotton. Dalits could not wear anything on top except for small *dhoti* tied untidily and they were never allowed to wear shoes or cover their head with cloth in front of upper caste men. The middle castes while attending the festivals of the upper castes would dress up neatly, wearing turban and shoes. These castes were not allowed to wear *janeu* as they were not considered twice born⁴⁴. Now there is an obvious difference in dress under the influence of communication and contact with city and introduction of different professions which are not caste based and villagers are less strict about dress code rules. Mahendra Singh (62), a Rajput told that earlier lower castes could be differentiated with their dresses in cities also because they would always wear red coloured socks, and bright clothes unlike upper castes. Mahendra Singh, considers that cinema, TV, etc have an educating effect on these castes in respect of dressing up and acquiring civilised and modern habits. According to upper caste men, earlier lower caste men did not know how to sit properly on the cots and conduct themselves in public.

**Females**: Earlier the upper caste women wore sarees, and blouses while middle and lower caste women wore *lehngas* and skirt, blouse, with *orni* (head covering cloth). Mostly women of Dhimars and Khatiks etc. wore shirts like men over sarees and lehnga in the village under the influence of Jat women of nearby villages.
Earlier the Bhangans (female Bhangi) could wear saree up to ankle length. They could not use sandalwood essence or flowers etc. for beautification purposes. Presently no such dress code was observed by me in Sikhera. All caste's women wore sarees. The unmarried girls were dressed up in salwar suits, which were bought from local market, (paith) in Sikhera. While talking to Dhimar woman, who is a lady tailor, I was shown newspaper and magazine cuttings given by village women for designing the salwar suits. Children are dressed up in similar way as city children like in knickers, jeans, T-shirts etc.

2) Shringar

Married and unmarried females could be distinguished by the use of vermilion (sindoor) put in the hair-parting. Earlier women's beauty-aide was barber's wife (Nain), who would get flower, oil her head, cut her nails, put ubean (a paste of turmeric cream and besan) on Jajman's wife. She would make different styles of hair for Jajman women on special occasions. She was also helped by the Dhimar or Khatik women in this task. These practices were prevalent among the upper castes women earlier. Now such services are sought only on occasions of marriage, child birth etc. This is so because such services now cost money and less women are available for such services unlike earlier. Many women use artificial cosmetics, plastic flowers and other adornments bought from local vendors in the village.

3) Jewellery

Men used to wear Kundal in their ears but this is obsolete now. Use of different metals were also done according to one's caste. The men and women of high castes could wear gold below waist. Middle castes did not wear gold. Dalits
were prohibited from wearing gold, and they mostly wore silver. The Dalits wore round silver anklets with Ghungroo. Vaishya could not wear gold in feet. Payal (anklets), bangles and bindi were favourite ornaments among women and are favourite even at present. Dalit women did not come out in the village wearing good clothes, and ornaments. Mostly lower castes depended on discarded clothes from the houses where they worked. During family rituals, like childbirth they were given ‘Neg’ (gift) and during Holi the soiled clothes were given to Bhangis by custom. These practices have almost discontinued now firstly, because of the end of Jajmani system and secondly, the soiled clothes are not accepted by the service castes. Thus this sort of cultural dependency is on decline in the village.

Even the recreational or traditional communicators like Sangis, Bhits, Nats, could be recognized by their way of dressing in the village. Sangis mostly had tattoos on their hands and sometimes feet. The Sangi and Nat women are known as experts in tattoo designs, and in their knowledge of herbal medicines.

4) Colour

Colour also has an important significance in Indian mythology and especially to folk society which is closely related to nature. At the onset of Basant, (Spring) clothes of yellow color are worn as it is an auspicious colour and this festival also signifies that sunrays are becoming strong. On Teej in Sawan (August to September) clothes of green colour are worn since it is the time when the rains come and there is greenery all around (green also signifies fertility). Hence these colours are worn on particular days to have positive effect on their village life and also to celebrate nature, since their livelihood is dependent on it.
The colour of skin is also a symbol of high caste or low caste. There is a saying in the village that a “A fair Chamar, and a dark Brahmin, should never be trusted”. The preconception that is evident from the saying is that, Chamar is always dark and a Brahmin is always fair, and if these qualities are not present in the respective caste person then he is not trustworthy. For their son’s marriage people prefer fair colour bride since it is a sign of twice-born, upper caste and also signifies purity of blood.

An important thing I noticed in Sikhera village was that temple in the main village where upper castes and middle castes worshipped, was painted in white colour and the temple were lower castes worshipped was painted brick red. The meaning given to colour as told by the temple purohit was that white colour of upper caste’s temple signified ‘Sad Guna’ (good qualities) which was attributed to white colour. Similarly temple painted in red colour signified Rajo Guna or qualities which signify lust, greed and materialistic nature. Secondly another reason for difference in colour lies in the fact that the former is a Shiva temple whose colour is supposed to be white and latter temple is of a mother goddess (Durga) whose favorite colour is red. In marriage the bride wears the red colour saree, which signifies the entry in the materialistic life for girl. Thus the colours used in village have special significance since they serve to signify certain events and status of person in social life.

**Indian Folk Songs**

Folk music as commented by Alan Lomax a specialist in ethnic music presents a specialized act of communication which invites members of the society for participation in social events and communications. In India folk has played an
important role in the past in uniting people during National Movement, when *Prabhat Pheri* and *Bande Matram* and other patriotic songs were sung. These songs served the purpose of imbibing people with patriotic spirit and bringing them in the mainstream of National Movement. Folk music mostly has gone unnoticed, undocumented though it is a new craze in urban centres among elites with supposedly ethnic taste. A few folk songs, popular in Sikhera have been given in appendix-6.

Folk songs and music both absorbed the changes taking place in society and their content and meaning changed according to the need of hour, be it for patriotism or against a despotic ruler or a landlord in a village. This flexibility is visible when folk songs are harnessed by government agencies to communicate about literacy programs, population programs, awareness about human rights and Panchayat Raj and so on. The folk songs are harnessed by Government to reach the rural folk who associate themselves with folk songs.

Though folk music or folk songs are contextual and are fashioned by local culture, there are various folk musical styles and songs peculiar to different regions in India as Baul and Baliale in Bengal, the Duha and Garba of Gujarat, the Rowada and Lavani of Maharashtra, the Kajri or Charti of U.P., the Kolkali Pattu of Kerala, the Bihu of Assam, the Mand and Pani-hari of Rajasthan, the Foul and Chakri of Kashmir, Sua and Dadara of M.P. These singing styles establish their cultural and linguistic identity, and impart community feeling and facilitate group communication among the folk people.

Every festival and ritual in folk tradition is associated with particular musical style in India. There are certain special singers, like Bhats, Sangis, Jogis.
Bhagats, Fakirs, and women who are important bearers of this music tradition. The style of singing, meter and tone of folksongs are different for each singer. Sangi and Jogi sing in high pitch, Fakir sings in serious tones and low base. Women sing in shrill and high pitch. Similarly the songs differ from caste to caste. The folk songs sung by lower castes mostly have abundance of simple, colloquial (dehati) words than sanskritic words. The meaning of songs reinforces and is related to emotional and social feeling. Certain songs are based on joking-relationship as between sister and brother-in-law (sali-jija), between the samdhis (relatives by marriage), husbands younger brother and sister-in-law (Devar-Bhabi).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song type</th>
<th>Occasion of singing</th>
<th>Sung by Male/Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kirtan/Bhajan</td>
<td>Katha/Worship (pooja)</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phag</td>
<td>Holi</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabir</td>
<td>Holi (Satirical)</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kajari</td>
<td>Rainy season (Sawan)</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birha</td>
<td>Romantic situation</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malhar</td>
<td>During work/seasonal</td>
<td>Male/Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhairvi</td>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawan</td>
<td>Seasonal folk song</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baramasa</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaumasa</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaupai</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorva</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakata</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dadra</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chand</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banni/Banna</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seethna</td>
<td>Marriage (satirical)</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhat</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jyonar</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehandi</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghodi</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sohar</td>
<td>Child birth</td>
<td>Females/Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorri</td>
<td>Lullaby</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 List of folk songs
The folk songs can be classified in three types:

i) Life cycle songs, ii) Work-songs and iii) Seasonal songs.

The type of song on such occasions and whether it is sung by male or female is being given in table 3.1.

Grierson has pointed out the flexibility of these folk songs since they are linked with experiences and events of every day life. This is more evident in the marriage songs which show that the new bride or new bridegroom prefers latest cosmetics, clothes, vehicles, fashion etc. Before marriage women of village community sing folk songs (Banni) for bride and similarly Banna for bridegroom. These songs signify a particular happening in the family. The beat of dholak at night signifies a call for sangeet to women.

There are songs which are wishful, and pray for the blessings of God, like when the bride leaves her home, women sing Bidai and when the marriage procession of bride groom leaves, the folk songs sung are called Charat and Ghori. The folk songs sung for happy married life and blessing of God are known as Dadre in Sikhera.

Sehra folk song is sung when the headgear Mohar is tied on bridegroom's head by groom's relatives. At the time of feast, folk song is sung in honour of bride groom's party and exhibits happiness of bride’s parents. The songs which are based on joking relationships are teasing in nature and are called as Seethana. Mostly Nain (wife of Barber) invites other women, and plays Dholak and manjira on such occasions. In return she is given Inam (money) and Neg (clothes etc.).
Some songs are weather related like about twelve months, Baramasa, sung in Sawan and Chaumasā, about four divisions of weather. These are regarding the qualities of 12 and four divisions of the months. Songs like phaag, are sung during phalgun month of Holy. During rainy season and Teej in which Henna is applied to hand, Teej and malhar are sung. It is believed in the village that darker colour of Henna on one’s palm shows the extent of affection of one’s mother-in-law. Certain kinds of romantic emotions are exhibited in Kajari which is also sung during rainy season. When the husband goes out of village, Rasia is sung exhibiting love. Folk songs are thus associated with fast (Vrat), festival (Tyohar), worship (Puja) or fete (Parv) which have ritualistic and religious orientation.

Proverbs

Archer Taylor defines proverb as “a terse didactic statement that is current in tradition”. Proverbs (Kahavat) are ‘sayings’ which are condensed folk-logic and guides on social behavior. Proverbs might be said in simple language but they exhibit and reinforce the practical way of socialization. They are said in rhyming language, so that it is easy to remember them. They contain age old truth which has been tested again and again. There are proverbs regarding every single aspect of life which have been formulated after observing the social relationships. Many a time a decision by panchayat is done on the basis of proverb.

People justify their social system or incidents through proverbs and often utilize proverbs as satire against others. Proverbs which are commonly used in social communication in Sikhera have been given in Appendix-4 and cover a wide

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variety of subjects like castes, world-view, days of the month, food, health and harvest.

**Riddles**

Riddles are an important part of traditional communication. They are often said during social gatherings, marriages and have a humorous content. Riddles are metaphorical and have similies aligned together, which give clue regarding the answer asked. Hence symbols are at work in riddles. Riddles are also culture bound like other elements of oral tradition.

The primary function of riddles in village society is of entertainment and competition. It often becomes a way of getting familiar with the family and people of village. If an outsider gives the answer correctly he is welcomed and considered worthy of hospitality. Some common riddles relate to agriculture, clothes and things seen around and of common sense. Some riddles which were found in common use in Sikhera have been given in Appendix-5.

**Art And Aesthetics**

The wide range of visual metaphors and drawings in Indian tradition are practised in form of paintings, scrolls, murals, idols, totem symbols, tantrick configurations and floor motifs. They are made as drawing on the walls of the house, or as alpana or ritual drawing on floor, tattoos on arms etc. Most of the figures in the drawing are simple and are forms of the visual communication which claim origin from the primitive drawing and folk painting.
Symbols used in ritual drawings are not immediately obvious to an outsider. Hence the sun and moon drawn in ritual motifs of Sanjhi or Jhanji pictograph signify both good and bad phases and bad fortune in life.

Peacock used in floor and wall drawings signify welfare and peace. Other figures drawn are of fish, elephants, trees which communicate an association of fertility and prosperity. Bull and signify vitality, vigour. Swastik also signifies auspicious, good omens and general well being. Lotus, Shankh (conch), Gada (Mace) and Chakra (discus) signify symbols of Vishnu and two feet signify Lakshmi.

There are various floor drawings like Alpana (Bengal), Mandna (Rajasthan), rangoli (Maharashtra), Chowk (Gujarat), Sipan (Bihar) and Kolam (South India).

The symbols not only become a source of inspiration but were also considered as God or deity themselves. Most of the houses had some walls on which designs are made by white lime (choona) by simple cloth or sometimes by hands with dexterity. The designs are generally in straight lines, concentric circles, triangular lines which are common. The straight lines denote the continuity of soul, concentric circles denote the materialistic world which encloses the individual, triangular lines denote the ups and downs of happiness and sorrow. The significance of these symbols was told by one old Rajput lady to me. Otherwise designs in Sikhera are made or just copied without the knowledge of inherent meaning of these symbols. There are different drawings as per different festivals and fasts and parv (fete). Diwali, Gugga Naumi, Sanjhi, Karvachauth.
Lakshmi Pujan, Sakat are festivals and fasts when these ritual drawings or Chauk Purna are done. Sanjhi is celebrated by young unmarried girls in Ashwin (October) by making designs on mud walls with cow dung for 15 days. On sixteenth day a big Chawk (Square) is made. The motif represents the Hindu custom of marriage and depicts a girl leaving house with husband (Refer Appendix-8). In Sanjhi drawing a bullock-cart, a house, an elephant, a peacock, a pandit, a marriage procession, a grinding stone, a girl, a bridegroom and a drum etc., also figure in geometrical style. In Sikhera, Jaharvir naumi is celebrated and puja is done in the month of Sawan 9th of Shukla/Paksh. On this occasion with a chalk five snakes in a square are drawn inside and two snakes are drawn outside. Four Satiya Swastika signs are made on four corners. Then leaves are made all around almost like henna leaves. A triangle is also made in the North. The figure is made by ocre Geru. Some specimens of ritual drawings and motifs, which are usually made in Sikhera, have been given in Appendix-8.

Tattoos

Tattooing has been an integral part of folk and tribal culture. It is common in other parts of world like China where dragons are tattooed on arms and other parts of body. In India it was done to decorate body and mostly done as moles on cheek, forehead, and chin etc. Women tattooed names of their husbands on their wrists and arms. There are also instances in the village Sikhera when word chor (thief) is tattooed on one who has committed theft to signify that he has been caught committing theft. Hence tattooing not only expresses the aesthetic approach
of the pre-literate society but also symbolizes the identification mark. Young girls of Rajput families and often sisters and brothers were tattooed in similar manner as an identification mark.

In Sikhera, (not presently) earlier tattoo was a sought after art. Mostly the Nat women were specialists of this art. Then one Kumhar woman learnt it from them. Though she was considered licentious, but people came with children and wives to get themselves tattooed. Certain castes like upper castes prefer simple dots, or Chakra. Brahmins preferred tantra (a tantric configuration according to stars), peacock etc., or one's name; lower castes got scorpion, moon, sun etc. tattooed on their arms. Thus this added to hierarchy of symbols which are specific to each caste.

In most of the agricultural upper and lower castes Keri (unripened mango), Jawar ka Bhutta (millet) and Chauk (Square) are made with many interwoven variations like paga (feet), Chhehful (six flower), laddu (ball), Tipki (dot), Laharia (waving lines). A few common tattoo marks used by villagers in Sikhera have been given in appendix-9.

Folk Customs And Beliefs

One very important way of communication to outsider is not only through dress, food, etc. but also through certain beliefs which are common phenomena in village. In Sikhera, the new houses invariably have a black demon like face hung on the door to save the house from evil-eye. Secondly, one might find some flowers, incense, coconut, lemon, salt on a crossing which is done by some one to appease evil spirit and one is advised not to cross it, lest some spirit might possess passerby.
Sometimes a cactus is hung on the door which signifies the birth of a girl. If one hears drum beat at night, people know that a son is born. On the door of few houses and shops, one fresh lemon and seven green chilies are hung afresh on each Saturday since this is believed to keep away evil spirits. Most of the tongas, bullock carts, and animals have black threads (Chutila) tied to them to save them from evil eye (nazar). The practice is more common among Hindus than among Muslims. Most of the time, people tie black thread on themselves to keep away from evil eye and children are made to wear different Charms (tabeez) to keep evil spirit away. These charms are given mostly by Jogi or Fakir in Sikhera. The physical expressions and variations also serve the purpose of symbolic communications. A person’s shaved head signifies death in the family. Similarly woman wears white sari if her husband is dead.

The above given symbolic communication in terms of aesthetic arts, music etc. and verbal communication are an integral part of peasant life. Most of these like singing particular folk song on particular occasion, or using proverb, or making motifs are unconscious part of village tradition.

In Sikhera, during the discussions and interview many villagers responded without any hesitation about occasions, festivals, music, folklore since they were associated with cultural and symbolic communication. The awareness about folk tradition was more in above 50 years than in samples of 30-50 years age group samples. Below thirty were neither comfortable, when asked questions about folk tradition nor were fully aware of sayings, art, tattoos etc. due to lack of time, or employment in city or growing disinterest in cultural significance of traditional beliefs. This was attributed to exposure to city life and
associated influences of cinema, TV and Radio. It was observed in Sikhera that the youth both men and women, do not feel bound by traditions and customs. Thus shirking off traditions and such symbols which are old gives them the satisfaction of being modern and being ahead in life than other villagers.

On account of the entrance of the forces of modernization (in terms of literacy, political participation and awareness and increasing media use) and urbanization (through the channel of radio, TV, Cinema, urban contact, etc.), the symbolic content of the communication has become general to all castes and the traditional differences in dresses, ornaments, arts and aesthetics now do not exist.

In the present chapter, traditional modes of communication have been discussed. Traditional mode of communication has been defined as contextual, cultural, interpersonal and symbolic in nature. The channels of communication are traditional and social in nature. These are divided into formal and informal, regular and irregular, ritualistic, recreational (Traditional media and performances), oral (music, riddles, sayings, proverbs), art and aesthetics (traditional drawings, motifs, tattoos), folk beliefs and physical expressions. These channels of communication overlap each other in social, religious, recreational and ritualistic spheres. Hence these have been divided by me for the sake of convenience of their study. These channels are peculiar to social occasions and social events of the village and are often divided on caste, gender and age lines.

As traditional form of communication operates in a closed traditional society, where alternative sources of information are less, emphasis has been given to traditional sources of information like Purohits, Nais, Bhats, Jogis and Bhagats because these particular communicators exercise traditional authority over
traditional society and these authorities are trusted by all in the village for information.

The contextual nature of communication makes the content of traditional mode of communication symbolic in nature. The symbols are expressed through colours of dress, art and drawings; through gestures by having a Ghera or a Bhat or by wearing a particular type of dress or by wearing an ornament of a particular metal and are shared by all in the village. All these signify the status and position of a person in social hierarchy. Thus the function of traditional communication is to maintain, preserve and transmit the culture of society from generation to generation (Ritual View of Communication).

In this chapter I have also made an attempt to discuss and present the types, functions and processes through which traditional communication functions in a traditional peasant society. References have been made more to the earlier times to understand the old system of communication and to examine the kind of changes which have taken place in means of communication. The channels which bring change in village traditional communication have been discussed in the following Chapter IV.

Reference Notes

2. Singer, Milton., op. cit, p.87.


8. While conducting research on rural society, Robert Redfield used the term 'peasant' while George M. Foster used the term 'folk' for the village society.


10. Weber has talked of three types of legitimacy claims to legitimacy on rational grounds involving a belief in enacted rules (legal authority); legitimacy based on charisma (Chrismatic authority) and thirdly legitimacy based on traditional grounds, involving a belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions (traditional authority). Thus tradition not only becomes normative guide but also basis of exerting power and domination over others.


12. Mc Carthy, Thomas “The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas” Polity Press, 1978, p.183. As Habermas has conceived That, “Language is also a medium of domination and social power. It serves to legitimise relations of organised force. In so far as these relations are merely expressed in the legitimations, language is also ideological.


21 Warner, W., Lloyd quoted in Collins R. "Three Sociological Traditions".


25. This feature is also highlighted by Redfield in his survey of Yucatan, where agriculture is associated with religious/ritualistic ceremony in "Folk Culture Of Yucatan".


27. Apte, Mahadev L. "Traditional Folk Media In India" p.28.

28. Vatuk, V.P. "Folklores And Folk Tradition". p.34.


30. Vatuk, V.P and S, "Folklore And Folk Tradition Of India" op. cit. p. 71.


33. Mukherjee, A.C., "Hindu Fasts And Feasts", Indian Press, Allhabad, 1918, p.11.


41. Gupta, Dipankar, "Continuous Hierarchies And Distant Castes, OUP, Delhi p.127.

42. Majumdar, D.N. " Caste And Communication p.167.


45. Vatuk, op. cit, p.56.

46. Fuchs, Stephen, op. cit, p.234.


49. Parmar, Shyam op. cit p.54.

50. Wadley, Susan S. op.cit.p.311.