Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction
As India grows steadily into one of the foremost developing nations of the world the discourses of development remain the area of primary concern in all disciplines of academia. Development is a multi faceted phenomenon with complex issues of society, values & norms, economics, politics, culture etc. intertwined with each other with welfare of human beings at the core. Development may broadly be classified into two types, the materialistic development which is tangible in nature, and the development of human faculties, intangible in nature. Both are mutually related as the former cannot be appreciated or implemented if the latter does not happen. The aspect of media and communication is directly associated with culture and deals with various idioms of dissemination of thoughts, ideas and information which is relevant to different types of development. In a third world country like India it is likely that any socially relevant academic research will have a development angle to it. The present study is on Communication for Development, an well established part of the discipline of Communication Studies where the focus is on the use of Theatre in the Koraput-Bolangir-Kalahandi (KBK) region of Odisha.

The KBK region of Odisha comprises the 8 districts of Bolangir, Subarnapur, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Rayagada, Koraput, Nabarangpur and Malkangiri. It is situated along the west-southern part of the state bordering onto Chattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh and historically has been one of the most backward regions of India in terms of health, education and socio-economic amenities. The area is inhibited by a sizeable tribal population comprising tribes like Paraja, Kondh, Gond, Durua to name a few and characterized by problems like poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, displacement & migration among others. Forest cover, hills and lack of transport & communication facilities make the area remote & terminal. Poor communication infrastructure, lack of mobile & internet connectivity coupled with left wing extremist activism has deterred development process as well as setting up of an environment conducive to acceptance of development in the region. As mass level ignorance and lack of awareness prevail in the area, the government as well as the NGOs are trying to take the messages as well as fruits of development to the people. The existence of a rich tradition of folk cultural idioms and socio cultural rituals
are seen as important vehicles of communication in the area rather than the conventional mass media which is struggling to penetrate due to infrastructural and cultural barriers. There are plenty of folk & traditional cultural forms which have emerged out of rituals. Primarily, they are forms of worship and entertainment. The present study explores the secondary possibilities of using these forms, especially Theatre, to spread the message of development.

Theatre, one of the oldest medium of communication has been acknowledged as possessing an intrinsic strength of educating people. It is said that the ancient man described his experiences of hunting and the nature to his fellowmen through physical acting, as language had not developed then, and this gave birth to mime, or mimesis as it was termed by Aristotle, which is basically the precursor to Theatre. As human civilization developed, the art of theatre was developed by village folks and they created a tradition of arts which keep on flowing across generations. As townships and countries emerged, Theatre became a great form of entertainment as well as expression. The advent of language gave birth to great playwrights and different forms of urban theatre across the globe. From Sophocles, Shakespeare to Ibsen, Tagore, Chekov, Sartre and all, Theatre has gone from strength to strength due to its innate capability of making the people think, and raise a consciousness from within the psyche of not only the audience who experience it but also the artists who perform it.

The great 19th century religious philosopher, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, teacher of Swami Vivekananda, the internationally reputed seer-philosopher, went to see a commercial play written & directed by Nataguru Girish Chandra Ghosh, who happened to be his disciple. Those days it was considered to be a sin to visit the play house as actresses were mostly prostitutes. One such actress, Vinodini Dasi’s acting mesmerized the Paramahansa and after the show, he came to the green room and blessed her. It is there, as the fable goes, he famously engraved the greatness of Theatre by commenting, ‘Theatre e lokoshikkhe hoi’ (m. Theatre educates masses). As it happens in our society, theatre too got classified. The great Greeko-Roman empires gave birth to open amphitheatres while during the British empire it went inside the auditorium & became a commercial affair conditioned with tickets, termed as Proscenium. The genre produced great playwrights, texts, productions and artists. Gradually an alternative genre emerged with a
philosophy and pedagogy contrasting to the mainstream proscenium. This experimental genre too became a tradition over the years with a series of concepts, terminologies and practitioners and opened up the faculties of theatre beyond entertainment, a theatre that could protest, criticize, comment and aid to bring about a psychological transformation in human beings. Thus, a debate started along philosophical lines, what is Art for, the sake of art itself or for the sake of people? The Marxian perspective was discoursed upon by the likes of Bertolt Brecht, Artaud, Grotowski and many others. Describing the interpretative role of Theatre, Brecht said, ‘Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it’. Propounding the celebrated concepts of alienation and epic theatre, Brecht went on to create a departure in eye opening theatre with his immortal texts like Three Penny Opera, Mother Courage, The Life of Galileo, Good Woman of Setzuan to name a few.

An excerpt from Galileo goes like:

**ANDREA:** But I can see with my own eyes that the sun goes down in a different place from where it rises. So how can it stay still? Of course it can't.

**GALILEO:** You can see, indeed! What can you see? Nothing at all. You just gawp. Gawping isn't seeing.

(He puts the iron washstand in the middle of the room)

Right, this is the sun. Sit down.

(Andrea sits on one of the chairs, Galileo stands behind him.)

Where's the sun, right or left of you?

**ANDREA:** Left.

**GALILEO:** And how does it get to be on your right?

**ANDREA:** But you carrying it to my right, of course.

**GALILEO:** Isn't there any other way? (He picks him up along with the chair and makes an about-turn. Now where's the sun?

**ANDREA:** On my right
GALILEO: Did it move?

ANDREA: Not really.

GALILEO: So what did move?

ANDREA: Me.

GALILEO: Bellows: Wrong! You idiot! The chair!

ANDREA: But me with it!

GALILEO: Of course. The chair's the earth. You're sitting on it.

The relevance of Communication attains a new dimension when it assumes the role of an aid to development. Communication, itself is not synonymous to development but it is potentially a tool of development. The very fact that Communication, with its multifaceted idioms possess the capability to reach out to people, present messages, play on their psyche, thereby creating a possibility of the emergence of a conducive atmosphere to affect a change in their behavior & thinking, bestows the status of being an “agent of change” to it. When we speak about “multifaceted idiom”, we precisely hint at the various types & kinds of communication that exists, starting from Communication with the self i.e. Intra Personal Communication to Mass Communication.

With the advancement of science & technology the communication process has opened up new dimensions & undergone a paradigm shift in terms of procedure. The onset of civilization had seen communication as a discursive & interpretative production of the self, as we find out in the paintings on the walls of the ancient AL Tamira cave in Egypt. One of the group activities of the ancient man in the evening was to replicate the day’s hunting prowess through body language. As language developed, human communication shifted its reliance from body to the verbose. The shift continued with the introduction of the pen & paper to today’s keypad & mouse. From letters carried by doves to emails, photographs to selfies, book to facebook, can reels to digital videos, newspapers to e-papers, money orders to e-banking, Communication has come a long
way in terms of process, idiom & content. While the ‘time’ factor has greatly been revolutionized, the ‘impact’ factor still remains the strength of the Traditional Communication ways.

Although the development process post second world war followed the Top Down Approach prescribed by Bretton Woods School of thought, leading to advocation of use & development of mass media infrastructure in third world countries by communication scholars like Daniel Lerner, Everette Rogers and Wilbur Schramm. These advocations were followed up in practice in different under developed countries and established itself as the Dominant Paradigm of Communication. However, it was critiqued heavily on its failure to bring about any significant change in the third world countries. The Frankfurt School came up with thoughts emphasizing on culture being an important factor of communication. The UNESCO also commissioned the Sean Macbride Commission to enquire into the imbalance in communication order across the globe. An excerpt from Many Voices One World, the commission’s report is relevant as:

“Extensive experience shows that traditional forms of communication can be effective in dispelling the superstitions, archaic perceptions and unscientific that people have inherited as part of traditions and which are difficult to modify if the benefits of change are hard to demonstrate. Practitioners of the traditional media use a subtle form of persuasion by presenting the required message in locally popular artistic forms. This cannot be rivalled by any other means of communication.”(Macbride, 1980)

Researchers like Nora Quebral also reviewed the existing concepts of Development Communication and reiterated on the need of human communication and from here emerged an alternative paradigm of development based on Participatory Approach, emphasizing on involvement of people in their own process of development. The focus now shifted back from mass media to human communication-“In many developing nations the mass media in their present form are not suited for the kinds of development tasks they have to perform.....”(Melkote & Steeves, 2001, p.220). Culture based traditional forms of Communication like Theatre, Puppetry, Folk Music & Dance etc. regained relevance. Theatre, undoubtedly, the first
and primary art form of human civilization is very strong and effective medium of communication for backward areas of the Third World Countries. Theatre is not only an art form but a life style process which puts the principle of participatory communication to practice. It appeals for change from within, quite contrary to the mass media which tries to impose change from outside. This quality of Theatre addresses the cultural and socio-psychological constraints to change—“It is more than entertainment, it is a complete emotional experience and creates a state of receptivity in which messages can be most effectively transmitted.”(Malik, 1982, p. 29) Needless to say, the mass media is still harping about on finding answers to the issue of dissemination of information in areas deprived of basic developments of electricity.

As Paulo Freire came up with his seminal ‘Pedagogy of the oppressed’ the pro people welfare agenda in theatre was consolidated and established a much needed community model of development. Refering to existing models of school education on which he based his treatise, Freire said:

“Critical dialogue has to be the foundation of formal and non-formal education, in order to produce students who would question their own position and status of sub-alternity, and in the process, begin to speak and unspeak their world—that is, to participate in the reconstruction of a better society.” (Freire, 2005)

The theatre practitioners who were following the developments in experimental theatre and searching for a model of theatre which suits the philosophical stand points of the likes of Marx & Brecht were further blessed with Augusto Boal’s ‘Theatre of the oppressed’, a manual of implementing community based theatre techniques for development. By that time the agencies of the United Nations were already into deep research and framed the concept of Communication for Development. It was natural but not to have a applied theatre form as a offshoot of the CfD known as Theatre for Development (TfD). In TfD, drama scripts are improvised on a certain developmental issue and presented according to the need of the people and area which is the target for change & development—“Theatre & dance combined with music & poetry are strongly established in South Asia, as well as in South East Asia, and constitute a significant platform for social, spiritual and political Communication.”(Nygren, 2009, p. 11)
Introduced by United Nations through its well thought Communication Policy, Communication for Development (CfD) which advocates ‘communication systems based on dialogue and that allows communities to speak out’ (UNDP, 2009, p. 5) has already been successfully implemented in many third world countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia in combating issues of health, literacy, hygiene, population and other developmental areas. In India, TfD has become a favourite tool of the NGOs and Government initiatives towards development. Although recommended in the MacBride Commission Report of UNESCO, Many Voices One World (1980), India is yet to form her cultural & communication policy. However, in recent times, the campaigns of development messages have relied heavily on use of TfD and other forms of traditional media in backward areas.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The research is centered around the preparation of media content. In this case the medium being Theatre, the study originates from the need to find out the best practices to use Theatre as a tool of Development Communication. The fact that the majority of the population of our country reside in rural areas which are underdeveloped and challenged in terms of modern technological penetration makes Theatre an important medium. The present study is concerned with the content of Theatre which aids development. The content needs to be specially designed to meet the needs of the region & its people and a good content may ensure success of the communication campaign.

The KBK region is characterized by a strong presence of tribal population and therefore the existence of a popular indigenous culture being carried over through tradition. Each district has its own signature folk idiom which is theatrical in nature resplendent with elements of dance, music and action. The big question is, how to use these forms in Theatre to spread message of development or awareness? This poses a huge aesthetic challenge before the communicators.

1.2.1 Scope and Significance of the study

The study area of the present research is the KBK region of Odisha which is presently one of the most developmentally challenged regions of India. Culturally, geographically the region is extremely varied & versatile-the language & dialect changing within distances of few kilometers.
The region has one of the major tribal population belts in India which makes it even more challenging to communication messages of modern development. Culturally, the region has its own distinct dialect, dance & theatre forms, rituals and attires. The rural population, mostly tribal, has not been exposed to modern scientific & technological innovations and is deprived of modern health care, sanitation & education facilities. Therefore, it is an uphill task for a communicator to reach the people and affect a change. Rural Theatre forms are being widely used to spread message of development. The present research analyzes whether these usages are proper or not.

The KBK region, belonging to Southern Odisha, encompassing the Koraput- Balangir-Kolahandi area presently comprises eight districts-Balangir, Subarnapur, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Rayagada, Koraput, Nabarangpur & Malkangiri. The region has traditionally been underdeveloped in area like health, nutrition, education and modernization. It lags behind the average national as well as state figures related to these areas. It is prone to diseases like Malaria, Dengue, Japanese Encephelities, Diarrhea. The women and child health is also a matter of grave concern.

Both the Government of India & the Government of Odisha, through their different schemes, projects have been constantly trying to address these issues of under development in the KBK region. In recent times, Unicef, World Bank and a flurry of small & big Non-Governmental Organizations have invested huge resources, finance & man power, to affect changes in the area. It is extremely difficult to bring about changes in areas where literary & education level is low. The efforts of both governments and NGO’s have found limited success in certain pockets and still there is a long way to go.

But, Theatre is after all, a performing art and here it was being used for a specific purpose. So, what happens to the aesthetic issues and questions which are central to the making and preparation of Theatre? The fact that it would be used in a region like KBK further demands more intense introspection into the aesthetic issues. How to prepare a theatre that will effectively communicate the messages of development to the affected people of KBK? As discussed above, there are so many models of and methods of Theatre already in existence and practice. The present research attempts to evaluate the already existing practices and to prepare a manual or guideline of the best practices of this process. The research may become all the more significant.
became till date no such comprehensive analysis have been undertaken in the field of Indian experiences of Theatre for Development. Though there have been many aesthetic studies in Proscenium Theatre of India. The significance of the research lies in the fact that till date India is a country which is low in rural electrification, internet penetration and subsequently mass media penetration. All the three factors are applicable to the developmental challenges in the KBK region. Therefore, human communication idioms are extremely handy and useful to propagate development messages in these areas. We have also to keep in mind that these areas have very dominant folk forms which will be very effective in dissemination of messages. Thus, Theatre is a great idiom of communication which may be used in these areas. Similarly, Theatre may be used in all such areas which bear the similar deprivation characteristics and are rich in indigenous cultural forms. Therefore, it is extremely important to search for the best practices if not formulate a model of using Theatre for Development, as in performing arts, no one can say a last word.

- Culture is an important factor in development prospects of third world countries. Majority of the backward population of India lives in her villages. Study of culture and its inter relation with development is essential for any communication research.
- The research encompasses a study of development communication policy of our country with regards to traditional media.
- Theatre is one of the oldest medium of communication and is important medium for under developed areas. Therefore, it is extremely pertinent to explore the strength & weakness of the medium of Theatre.
- The study undertakes to examine the aesthetic aspect of development communication strategy in the KBK region of our country.
- The study examines the initiatives of U.N. agencies who have had significant influence in shaping communication strategies.
- Tribal Development and the role of media in it is an extremely important issue. The KBK region has a dominance of tribal population and culture. The study critiques intervention strategies in the region.
• The study centers round Theatre and is a marked departure from the mass media orientation of the discipline of Mass Communication

1.2.2 Research Questions

The objective of the study is to find out the proper way to construct a Theatre communication with respect to the KBK region of Odisha.

The following questions frame the study:

1. How has Theatre been viewed and applied in CfD in India?
2. What are the problems and prospects of using Theatre in CfD in KBK region of Odisha?
3. What constitutes the aesthetics of TfD-Art or Communication?

The above questions, step by step, have been arranged in a way that a systematic enquiry would lead as to the answer to which this particular research is dedicated – towards the best practices of Theatre for Development, the do’s & do not’s of this particular idiom of communication which is of immense importance in the developing pockets of the our country and the world as a whole.

1.2.3 Objective of the study

Should there be a research without a purpose or objective? The very word ‘research’ indicates towards‘re-search’, searching an issue into depth, so as to achieve something useful for the society. Of course, there are researchers who believe in ‘knowledge for knowledge’s sake’ but the present research has been born out of three personal factors first, a passion for theatre as a means of communication and therefore to dwell deep into it. Secondly, to create a departure from the mass media orientation of the discipline of Journalism & Mass Communication to the alternative & human forms of communication. And finally, to find out how the idiom of Theatre may be used in developing areas of our country.

The major purpose and objectives of the present research may be outlined point wise as follows:

1. To study the policies, approaches & practices prevalent in the government and non-government sector in India with regards to use of Theatre in CfD.
2. To study the educational & aesthetic qualities of Indian Theatre and contextualize it to CfD.

3. To study the concepts, methods, aesthetics and practice of TfD in India and abroad

4. To study the performative & communicative potential of folk & traditional media of the KBK region of Odisha in context to their applicability in CfD campaigns in the region.

5. To conduct an aesthetic enquiry into the prospects and problems of using Theatre as a tool of CfD in KBK region of Odisha and suggest a best practice model of TfD which is relevant to the region.

**What the research does not aim for?**

It will be pertinent to state here that the present research in no way intends to find out the effects or influence of Theatre on the targeted people rather it aims to critically analyze the making process of theatre viz. content creation & dissemination method through Theatre to arrive at the desired purposes. This is a purely content oriented research with special focus on aesthetics and discourse.

There have been projects involving Theatre for Development in our country and many more to come. The major part of the country is still developing and backward in term of tangible modernization. Theatre is going to serve as a great weapon, a great catalyst in these rural to areas. Therefore, it is utmost necessary to attempt towards the best practices of communication. It is from this social cause that the present research originates.

**End notes**

1. Bertolt Brecht, German theatrician is known for his Marxian outlook in Theatre namely Alienation and Epic Theatre.

2. Marxian philosophy refers to German philosopher-scholar Karl Marx’s theory where he analyzes things from a class structure, the landlord, burgeois and the prolaterietes. He endorses class struggle by landless to resist exploitation.
References