



The Role of folk Media in Promoting Cultural Tourism Practice in Kerala

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Abstract: The importance of media in a society in different aspects is growing day by day. From motivational factor to an opinion leader, finally the media become decision makers in every modern society. Highly market driven media causes much more negative impacts on people. Now a day's folk media is considered as the least polluted media practices in our society. Marketing studies and tourism studies have been widely researched the role of media in tourism promotion in different aspects. Varying from folk music to online interactive games, every kind of media platforms are extensively using for tourism promotion for destination marketing and service promotion. The paper gives description of important folk art forms prevailing in Kerala. It also examines the role of folk media in promoting sustainable tourism practices in Kerala, through the cultural tourism activities.

Key words: Folk Media, Tourism Promotion, Cultural Tourism.

Introduction

Over the decades communication and media technologies has been gone for several changes. In all aspect, like content, production and distribution all media forms are find out its own methods for more connectivity and interactivity. The folk media is still unique in its performance and interaction. Cultural studies on communication clearly defines the importance of traditional media, especially folk media in communication of different generations and people. The communication experts focusing on folk media practices in different aspects. Ranganath defines "folk media as living expressions of the lifestyle and the culture of people evolved through the years" (Ranganath,1980). Every society has its own folk arts and cultural forms which described their culture, tradition,

lifestyle and uniqueness. As a communication tool folk forms motivating the people in desired direction. Folk media are the one of the best research tool for identifying the particular community' s communication patterns in different social and institutional context. Wang and Dissanayake defines folk media as, "a communication system embedded in the culture which existed much before the arrival of mass media, and which still exists as a vital mode of communication in many parts of the world presenting a certain degree of continuity, despite changes." (Wang et al.1984).

Objective of the study

1. To explore the relationship between Kerala folk arts and tourism in Kerala.



2. To find out the role of folk arts in promoting cultural tourism in Kerala.

Research methodology

The following paper is exploratory in nature and based on review of literature. Data has been collected from relevant books, research article, newspaper and website which has given valid and authentic information on Kerala' folk arts, cultural backgrounds and tourism.

The concept of sustainable tourism

From 1995, Charter for Sustainable Tourism, (World Conference on Sustainable Tourism, Lanzarote 1995), sustainable tourism practices were getting more attention from all over the world. Global Codes of Ethics for Tourism, 1999 (UNWTO) has clearly indicated the values of sustainable tourism practices in coming ages. "Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support system." [WTO 1998: 19]. It is focusing on balancing the natural resources using for tourism and its regenerative capacity to meet cultural, social and economic benefits of a particular community. Critical studies on tourism extensively demanding sustainable tourism practices which focusing on local culture, inclusive development of local area and ecological balancing. Cultural tourism concepts are profoundly supported by folk art forms.

Ecological tourism practices are highly recommended for reducing negative impact of tourism to local people. As a promotion tool, the role of folk media in shaping tourism as a responsible industry is notable. 1) It ensures more inclusive development, generate more economic and social benefits of local people. 2) Conservation of nature and cultural heritage and reduce negative impact of tourism industry. 3) It ensures more enjoyable experience through connecting with local people and, helps to understand their culture, tradition and life style. Sustainable tourism concept is significantly a blend of responsible, ethical, pro-poor and integrated tourism practices.

Sustainable Tourism through Cultural Tourism practices in Kerala

Despite occasional shakes, the figures indicate the growth tourism industry in Kerala. During 2017, 1,46,73,520 tourists visited the state, up from 1,31,72,535 in 2016 with an annual growth rate of 11.39% in domestic and 5.15% foreign tourist. It figured 8.29% of annual growth in foreign exchange earnings with a total revenue of Rs 29,658.56 crore in 2017 compared to Rs 33,383.68 in 2016. The Kerala tourism department has envisaged 'vision 2020' a policy note published in 2000 has foreseen sustainable and integrated tourism aspect in state by the time of 2020. Kerala, a state with high socio-economical progressive figures, demands more sustainable tourism development with ecological balance and cultural preservation. Cultural tourism practices through the support of folk art forms are widely recommended for sustainable tourism practices. K.M. Munshi proposing the three-way step of re-



interpretation, re-integration, adaption for recollecting the Kerala cultural values (Munshi, K.M, 1974). Since it accredited industry status in 1986, Kerala tourism has been taken very progressive steps to maintain the sustainable tourism practice with the principle of 'cultural tourism' concept. A small tourist state renowned as one of the ten paradises of the world by National Geographic Traveller, has been resorting promoting its cultural tourism concepts through its rich folk-art forms. Native art forms became the core attractions for both foreign and domestic travellers. All components of folk lore, like oral literature, festivals, martial arts, handicrafts and paintings are using to promoting cultural tourism.

Kerala folk media

The haughty mountain ranges, the golden beaches, emerald backwaters with commanding art forms attracting thousands of people to Kerala for centuries. The beautiful landscape is enriched with diverse culture, cast, people, tradition and uniqueness. Kerala's folk ritual heritage is as varied and rich as its landscape ((Mukhyopadhyay,1978). The traditional knowledge branch about the lives and culture of a community expressing aesthetically with emotional and ethical background is commonly called as folk lore. Generally, the folk-art forms of Kerala have been categorized into two, namely ritual and performing arts. Most of the folk forms irrespective of music, architecture, art, paintings, medicine, and sculptures which survives over the time has directly connected with the time bounded rituals. In every society some folk forms have been extinct over the time, and Kerala has no exception.

Mother goddess worship is the fundamental part of most of ritual performances in happening Kerala directly shown the reflections the Aryan invasion in southern parts of Indian region. Most of the rituals are directly connected with religious beliefs of community so the secular concepts are doubtful.

Classical art forms

Kathakali: *kathakali* as its literal meaning 'story play' method of mimicking puranic stories with colourful dress and enchanting makeup. *Kathakali* considered as the chief classical theatre form in Kerala. Kapila Vatsyayan (1989) categorically states that "*Kathakali* is the bridge between forms classified as tribal and folk and those termed as classical". The tribal primitive dances praising their deities of forest and land with instrumental music is considered as the origin of *kathakali*. Later progressive attempt has been done to making it more attractable and understandable for common audience. Usually it being performed in seasonal celebrations, general festivals and local festivals.

Mohiniyattam: *Mohiniyattam*, the typical dance form of Kerala which is following the devadasi dance tradition got much performers and audience from all class and community. Feminine moods and emotions reflects in this *lasya* -riches dance with lyrical background. The meaning of the music is expressing through body gestures and facial expressions. Acknowledged academies and professional dance institutions receiving thousands of foreign and domestic tourists for both experience and get training in *Mohiniyattam*.



Thullal: *Thullal* is one of the main semi-classical art form in Kerala. It communicates with the common people regarding puranic stories in a satirical way. *Thullal* is usually seen in temple festivals and cultural programmes. It considered as the first satirical art form in Kerala which has been widely using the element of hummer and social criticism. Now three varieties of *Thullal* are prominent in Kerala, namely *Ottan Thullal*, *Seethankan Thullal* and *Parayan Thullal*.

Folk dances

Thiruvathirakali: One of the most popular dance form in Kerala, also known as *kaikottikali* (play with clapping the hand). Here a group of women in special saree attire dancing for their own song around a lighted brass. The songs of *Thiruvathira*, or *Thiruvathira Pattukal*, are in the *Sopana* style, the Kerala version of the classical Carnatic music. It usually performed for general and local celebrations. Occasionally *Thiruvathirakali* is performed as ritual, here unmarried women are dancing for getting a suitable husband and married woman are performing for happy married life.

Margamkali: Apart from all other folk dances in Kerala, *Margamkali* credited for Christian dance tradition prevailing in Kerala. It generally performed by Syrian Christians in and especially by Knanaya Christian community in Kerala during their festivals and marriage. This form dances form is truly inspired from martial art form *Kalariipayattu*.

Oppana: *Oppana* holds chief position among Muslim tradition of folk dance forms. It reflects both Arabian and

native cultural elements and could be performed by both men and women. Most of these *Oppana* performances are relating to marriage occasions of Muslim community in Kerala.

Chavittunadakam: *Chavittunadakam* is dramatic dance form introduced by Portuguese in A. D. 16 and dominating among Latin Christian community in Kerala. Its a blend of eastern and western theatre practices which visualising the struggle of oppressed coastal community lives. Latin Christians are telling their story of history, culture and tradition of life through harmonised attempt of music, dance and drama.

Martial Art form

Kalaripayattu: *kalaripayattu* is one of the ancient martial art form of Kerala, and it said to be all other prominent martial art forms like, Kungfu and Karate are enrooted in *kalaripayattu*. It gives equal important for both physical and mental wellbeing of the performer which characterising high jumping and clicking techniques. Body movement, blocking and several breathing techniques are using in *kalaripayattu* is unique, so many dance schools and other sports academies delivering *kalaripayattu* training for their performers to maintaining physical and mental rejuvenation. The body movements synchronised with breathing rhythm can be reduce physical illness of the practitioner. Thousands of foreign and domestic visitors are practising *kalaripayattu* in different *kalaris* (practising ground of *Kalaripayattu*) in Kerala.

Ritual arts



Theyyam. Theyyam is ritual folk art prevailing in northern part of Kerala, devoted to multiple gods performed by inherited experts attiring illusory shape of god and directly communicate with devotees on their matters. The astonishing fact about Theyyam is, there is four hundred varieties of Theyyam performing in Kerala. The variation happens in content, context, region, season and in the basic myth. The researchers could not have confined Theyyam in a special genre of art like, drama, dance, festival or a performance. It achieved its name of genre according to the space and social context it being performed. Theyyam has gone under several changes over the decades, and like any other folk form, and it also getting wide critics regarding performances for monetary benefits.

Padayani. Padayani, as its literal meaning indicates 'row of soldiers', is very popular in central part of Kerala, especially in Kottayam and Pathanamthitta district, Kerala. Small group procession with special *kolam*, harmonised music and indigenous lighting techniques, become a large group once it reached in Devi temple. Inclusive and active participation of whole village is the most amazing factor about Padayani. The ritual is devoted to Bhadrakali, is blend of dance, drama, music, paintings and satire.

Koodiyattam. koodiyattam, is one and only art form from Kerala, acclaimed by UNESCO as "Masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of Humanity". It's one and only art form selected by UNESCO as expression of heritage, other than buildings and monuments till the date. It considered as the one of the most incredible theatre tradition which has

been surviving and practicing for last 2000 years. *Koodiyattam*, the literal meaning 'combined acting' is the lone specimen of Sanskrit theatre tradition in Kerala.

Apart from different variants of these major folk arts *Kolkali*, the Muslim dance tradition and *krishnaattam*, a drama telling the story of lord Krishna life are also important folk forms in Kerala. *Thookkam*, which is performed as offering in temples, *Mudiyettu*, ritual dance on kali devi, and *Poorakkali*, a dance art form enriched with martial arts steps also got much tourist attention from all over the globe. All these folk-art forms are contributing to the cultural tourism practices immensely. Foreign and domestic tourist from across the globe visiting Kerala for both experiencing and get training in different folk forms. Several cultural institutions profoundly supporting the tourist to get practising in different traditional art forms.

Cultural Institution in Kerala

For any society preserving their folk-art forms and, traditional cultural elements are very important. The attempt of cultural institutions like, academies, organizations, Museums, galleries and private communities are commendable. Kerala, the leading progress state in India, is enhanced with these public and private cultural communities. The Malayala Kalagramam Centre for Arts are performing well in cultural scenario of Kerala. Festivals, shows, training, orientation programmes offered by these institutions attracts thousands of



tourists to recognize Kerala's cultural legacy.

The administrative action taken by tourism department for maintaining ecological and cultural sustainability is praiseworthy. Thenmala ecotourism project is its first kind of ecotourism activity in country. Kumbalangi rural tourism, project, where tourist can directly interact with the villagers and explore the splendid activities of fishing village received much attention from tourism organisers around the globe. Responsible tourism model by Kerala government initiated initially in Kumarakom panchayath, Famous for back water tourism, mainly focused on women empowerment, employment opportunities, organised development and overview of economic success. 'A day with the masters' organised by Kerala Kalamandalam deemed cultural university is very successful in supporting culture tourism activity in Kerala. Here tourist can directly interact with teachers and students, and experience different cultural activities. Tourism in Kerala is an effective instrument for generating employment, earning foreign exchange, enhancing environment, preserving cultural edifices and thereby facilitating the overall development of the locale (Panda, 2007). Traditional medicinal practices, tourism festivals, handicraft markets, cultural events in resorts and tourist destinations are heavily supported by folk lore of Kerala.

Conclusion

Peter's, inventory of tourism attraction includes folklore as major attraction for cultural tourist. The authors of the book 'Folklore in the new millennium' (2004),

P. Chenna Reddy & M. Sarat Babu describes the diverse possibilities of folklore on Indian tourism. Now a day's tourist has clear cut intention for their visit, most of them behaved as traveller rather than a mere wander. They are much more eager on understanding the history, culture and tradition of their destination. Stake holders need to employ much more authentic performers of folk art forms to cater the interest of audience. Performance of folk art forms for monetary benefits questioning the traditional norms and ethical dimensions of art form. The possibility of 'cultural drift' also concerns the researchers. Faking cultural expressions could be disastrous to the state in the long run. Mushrooming cultural centres for marketing benefits are literally threatening the authenticity of cultural art forms. Despite criticism of commercialisation of cultural activities are there, cultural tourism concepts are supporting Kerala tourism in a progressive way.

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