



### **33. Storytellers of the Tribe: The Intersection of Media, Oral Traditions, and Knowledge Transmission**

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#### **Abstract**

*Oral traditions have been the cornerstone of knowledge transmission in tribal communities for centuries, serving as vital conduits for preserving history, culture, values, and wisdom. Storytelling, in particular, plays a pivotal role in shaping collective memory and identity among tribes, where the spoken word transcends generations, embedding rich cultural insights into the community's fabric. In the digital age, however, the landscape of knowledge sharing is evolving. The rapid rise of mass and digital media introduces both challenges and opportunities for tribal communities to sustain their oral traditions while engaging with modern modes of communication. This paper examines the intersection of media and oral traditions, focusing on how contemporary platforms—such as radio, television, social media, and podcasts—are influencing the ways in which tribal knowledge is shared, preserved, and transmitted. Through an analysis of case studies from various tribal communities in India, the research highlights the dual role of media as both a preserver and disruptor of traditional practices. It explores how media technologies can amplify tribal voices, making their stories accessible to a broader audience, while also discussing potential risks such as cultural commodification and the loss of authenticity. By tracing the evolution of storytelling in the digital era, this study underscores the need for media to be a collaborative tool in maintaining the integrity of tribal knowledge systems. The findings advocate for a balance between embracing technological advancements and safeguarding the authenticity of tribal narratives, ensuring that indigenous communities remain the storytellers of their own heritage in a rapidly changing world.*

**Keywords:** Tribal Community, Media, Knowledge Transmission, Oral Tradition, Intersection....

#### **Introduction**

Storytelling is among mankind's oldest and greatest universal rituals, serving as a key method for conveying ideals, histories, and emotions. Storytelling, defined as the art of relaying incidents, concepts, and lessons via narratives, acts as a bridge between generations, communities, and cultures. Prior to the advent of writing, narratives served as the principal method by which cultures transmitted information, safeguarded their legacy, and cultivated an understanding of identity. Narratives might amuse, educate, caution, or motivate, fulfilling several essential



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functions for the unity and endurance of primitive communities. Oral cultural traditions, albeit lacking written form, are profoundly anchored in oral storytelling and are thus influenced by communication (Adegbola, 2012). From the oral epics of Homer to the allegorical narratives produced by indigenous shamans, storytelling persists as a fundamental human heritage, offering a means to comprehend the world and one's position within it.

The evolution of media has significantly influenced storytelling, transforming the methods by which stories are produced, disseminated, and experienced. From the inception of cave drawings to the Gutenberg printing press, radio, television, and the internet, each technological advancement has revolutionised narrative, broadening its scope while simultaneously affecting its structure and substance. The storytellers serve as the caretakers of oral traditions, aiding in the preservation of this ancient knowledge system within tribal groups (Mark Turin, 2013; Vansina, 2009). The advent of digital media has enabled narratives that previously need physical closeness for narration and reception to now transcend temporal and spatial limitations, readily available at the push of a mouse. Mass media has enabled the engagement of global audiences, transforming storytelling from a primarily local or tribal endeavour into a collective worldwide experience. As media advances, the storyteller's function also transforms, adjusting to new tools and channels that intricately construct narratives.

The essence of storytelling is in the transmission of knowledge—how civilisations convey wisdom, traditions, and information between generations. In oral traditions, information is maintained and transmitted via spoken language, songs, and rituals, including listeners in a communal memory that endures as long as it is communicated. These narratives serve as educational frameworks, cultural blueprints, and moral guidelines, beyond mere entertainment. In contemporary society, media is essential for both safeguarding oral traditions and generating new ones. Although the channels have evolved, the objective basically persists: to guarantee that the wisdom of one generation enhances and educates subsequent ones. Thus, contemporary media functions as both a repository and a magnifier, facilitating the preservation and flourishing of the old craft of storytelling in the digital era.

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fundamental human heritage, offering a means to comprehend the world and one's position within it.

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### **The Role of Storytellers in Traditional Societies**

In traditional communities, storytellers have had a revered position as stewards of cultural, historical, and moral instruction. In contrast with recorded records that are maintained in written content, oral traditions depend on humans to transmit, modify, and communicate information over generations. Martins (2012) observed that oral tradition originates from the dawn of humanity, predating the advent of writing. These narrators, sometimes referred to as warriors in West Africa, poets in Celtic traditions, or shamans among Indigenous societies, serve as living custodians of collective knowledge. They are assigned the responsibility of safeguarding vital knowledge, encompassing origin narratives, historical occurrences, cultural convictions, and society conventions. Storytellers establish continuity between the past and the future via their storytelling, instilling a common sense of self and purpose in each generation.



In several cultures, storytelling transcends ordinary event narration, functioning as a performing art that employs diverse strategies and mnemonic devices to render stories memorable and effective. Mnemonics—specific strategies that enhance memory—are extensively employed to guarantee precision and retention. For instance, griots employ rhyming schemes, repetition, as well as rhythm as mechanisms to retain and narrate extensive histories or lineages. Chants and melodies function as effective tools, facilitating memory retention of the narrative while emotionally engaging the audience, therefore amplifying the message's impact. These traditions provide profound insights into human life and the core values we adhere to, emphasising the intimate connection between humanity and environment (Mahato, 2024). Rituals frequently precede storytelling sessions, establishing a hallowed ambiance that underscores the cultural along with spiritual importance of the narrative.

Oral storytelling serves as a community activity that promotes social connection. Storytelling sessions are collective assemblies in which members of a tribe or community convene to listen, acquire knowledge, and engage. This communal experience strengthens a common identity, reminding people of their position within the broader social structure. Storytellers convey narratives that highlight communal ideals, cultural standards, and ethical teachings, so facilitating the transmission of morals and expectations, reinforcing the oneness of the community. These oral traditions provide a sense of connection to heritage, unity in ideals, and resilience against external influences. The function of storytellers extends beyond mere entertainment; they are essential to cultural continuity, preserving the information and wisdom of previous generations for the benefit of future ones.

### **Oral Traditions as Knowledge Transmission**

Oral traditions have historically served as the principal means of knowledge transmission in several civilisations. Communities have maintained and transmitted tales genealogies, legends, skills, and ethics through oral tradition, independent of written documentation. This kind of information transfer has distinct advantages and disadvantages, depending on the collective engagement and flexibility of both narrators and audience members.

The versatility and relevance of oral knowledge transfer to the community are one of its strengths. Oral storytelling is essentially dynamic; as narratives are transmitted, they may be modified to address present challenges, so maintaining their cultural relevance and resonance. This adaptability enables communities to develop their narratives progressively, including new concepts and insights while maintaining fundamental principles. Moreover, oral traditions promote communal involvement—storytelling frequently serves as a group endeavour in which



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listeners actively participate, pose enquiries, and contribute. This participation cultivates a feeling of collective ownership of the information, strengthening the community's connection to the narratives and to one another.

The techniques that enable oral transmission are essential to its efficacy. Repetition is a crucial factor that aids both narrators and audiences in memorising stories. Through the frequent exposure to narratives, community members assimilate their particulars, integrating them into both personal and communal memory. This approach consolidates information, guaranteeing its precision and durability. Moreover, active engagement of listeners in communal involvement improves retention. Storytelling sessions frequently incorporate traditions or mnemonics—such as a beat, rhyme, or song—that reinforce the content conveyed. These strategies enable oral traditions to attain significant memorability, even without written documentation.

Notwithstanding these advantages, oral knowledge transfer possesses certain limits. In the absence of a definitive written record, knowledge is susceptible to loss or modification. Throughout centuries, as narrators transmit information, little modifications may accumulate, transforming or fragmenting the starting point narrative. This may occasionally result in the loss of certain details or knowledge deficiencies, particularly if a group experiences disturbances or if typical storytelling roles are diminished. The efficacy of oral transmission relies on the proficiency and recollection of individual storytellers, indicating that the demise or relocation of a storyteller can profoundly affect the maintenance of communal knowledge.

Comparing conversations with written information uncovers both complimentary and divergent characteristics. Oral traditions provide adaptability, allowing modification according to community need, whereas written records are immutable, maintaining material precisely as documented. Oral knowledge is generally communal and regarded as a community asset throughout the group, fostering shared ownership. Conversely, written documents frequently become the property of individuals or institutions, which may restrict wider accessibility. Furthermore, whereas oral traditions are often available to all listeners, written information relies on literacy, potentially establishing obstacles for some societal members. Written knowledge possesses the advantages of permanence and accuracy, safeguarding knowledge across time and place independent of memory or interpretation.

Oral along with written traditions function as complimentary methods for maintaining and conveying information, each with distinct advantages in fostering cultural continuity. The collective and adaptable essence of oral traditions guarantees that narratives retain their





significance for listeners, but the stable and comprehensive character of recorded knowledge offers a lasting repository for posterity.

### **The Impact of Media on Storytelling and Knowledge Transmission**

The growth of media has profoundly altered storytelling and knowledge dissemination, transitioning from old oral techniques to other kinds of mass media, such as print, radio, television, as well as online mediums. Each of these advancements has influenced not just the narrative techniques but also the reception and retention of stories, transforming the surroundings of cultural transmission at both local and global levels.

The transition through oral traditions to print was one of the initial transformations in storytelling. The introduction of the printing presses in the 15th century enabled the recording and distribution of narratives, concepts, and information on an unprecedented scale. Written communication imparted a feeling of permanence, facilitating the transmission of information across continents and its endurance through generations. Literature, pamphlets, and newspapers proliferated, allowing individuals to access narratives without need on direct, spoken communication. The print period revolutionised storytelling from a communal activity to a solitary one, enabling readers to engage with narratives discreetly and at their own tempo. However, print media also contributed to the standardisation of specific storylines and ideologies, which subsequently began to shape public opinion on a large scale.

The advent of radio and television in the beginning of the 20th century ushered storytelling into a new epoch characterised by immediacy and accessibility. Radio facilitated the resurgence of the spoken word, disseminating narratives, news, and information to extensive audiences concurrently. This was the inaugural occasion when extensive populations could simultaneously engage with the same narrative, although from the convenience of their residences rather than in a community setting or around a fire. Television introduced a visual element, enhancing the immersive experience that obscured the distinction between narrator and audience, vividly animating narratives. This epoch of broadcast media established a collective cultural lexicon and influenced national and global narratives. Radio and television facilitated the dissemination of real-time narratives, such as latest developments or live events, fostering a feeling of shared experience even inside the confines of individual homes.

In the last few decades, technological advancement has precipitated a significant revolution in narrative. The internet as well as social media platforms have transformed every device owner into a potential storyteller, democratising content creation and facilitating varied views. Digital channels such as TikTok and YouTube, podcasts, and blogs have rendered storytelling both



intimate and expansive, enabling narratives to reach millions in within seconds. This transition has significantly personalised narrative experiences, enabling people to select what they view, hear, and interact with according to their unique tastes. Nonetheless, digital media engenders a "global village" phenomenon, linking individuals across distances and fostering novel kinds of shared expertise and understanding.

The shift from traditional onto modern media has altered storytelling from predominantly group experiences to more individualised ones. In traditional societies, storytelling was a communal activity characterised by collective involvement, participation, and ritual, which reinforced social relationships within the community. Nevertheless, as media progressed, storytelling transformed into a more individualistic endeavour. For example, reading is often a solitary activity, as when listening to the radio or viewing television in a domestic setting. Digital media, although frequently interactive, is predominantly personalised, enabling users to construct material streams tailored to their preferences. Consequently, individuals may perceive the same narrative differently, influencing its collective significance and altering the dynamics of unified cultural comprehension.

The importance of mass media in shaping global narratives has significantly impacted local customs and storytelling practices. The extensive reach of television, movies, and internet platforms has made some narratives—often shaped by prevailing cultures—accessible to global audiences. This worldwide influence has allowed specific narratives to achieve universal recognition, establishing a shared cultural framework that unites individuals from diverse backgrounds. This influence can obscure and supplant indigenous customs, resulting in cultural homogenisation. In certain instances, local narratives conform to global expectations, whilst in others, they may progressively diminish under the influence of more prevailing media narratives.

Digital media offers a medium for the preservation and celebration of varied voices and traditions, however it also poses obstacles. Local customs, languages, and narratives sometimes find it challenging to rival extensively created and popularised content. As media increasingly globalises narrative, it establishes a fragile equilibrium between preserving local identities and engaging in the wider cultural milieu.

The growth of media has redefined storytelling, shifting it from a communal, directly experience to one that encompasses both individual and global aspects. Modern media has transformed the methods of storytelling and consumption, broadening its reach while simultaneously modifying its social and cultural foundations, therefore prompting fresh enquiries over the future knowledge distribution and preservation of culture in an increasingly linked world.



## **Digital Media and the Revival of Oral Storytelling**

### **1. The Rise of Digital Platforms as Storytelling Arenas**

- **Social Media:** The capacity of platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok to enable producers to disseminate narratives in concise, captivating formats, frequently integrating images with verbal expression.
- **Podcasts:** The surge in podcasts represents a renaissance of radio storytelling, allowing immersive, audio-centric narratives akin to conventional oral storytelling.
- **YouTube** serves as a multifaceted video platform that facilitates storytelling via vlogs, personal tales, and serial material, effectively engaging global audiences.

### **2. Digital Storytellers as Modern Griots, Bards, and Shamans**

- **Digital Storyteller:** The function of the digital storyteller encompasses the integration of conventional narrative techniques with multimedia technologies (Normann 2011). Digital creators resemble traditional storytellers in their role of maintaining and disseminating cultural tales, personal histories, and societal observations.
- **Community and Identity:** Similar to the roles of griots and bards in fostering community cohesion and cultural preservation, contemporary digital storytellers cultivate online communities and impact collective identity.
- **Legacy and Mentorship:** Examination of how digital media facilitates the transmission of knowledge and mentorship from seasoned storytellers to emerging producers, akin to the traditional methods employed by storytellers in training their successors.

### **3. The Unique Blend of Oral and Print Traditions in Digital Media**

The interactive essence of digital storytelling emulates the immediacy and collective experience inherent in oral traditions.

- **Archival Capabilities:** In contrast to conventional oral narratives that are ephemeral, digital media facilitates the creation of enduring records, merging the transitory essence of spoken language with the permanence of print.
- **Accessibility and Democratization:** Digital platforms facilitate storytelling for a multitude of voices, enabling a broader spectrum of narratives and viewpoints compared to conventional print or oral mediums.

Each part might explore specific instances or case studies, demonstrating the distinct ways digital media connects old storytelling traditions with contemporary technology.





## Challenges and Future Directions

- **Challenges:**

**Cultural Appropriation:** The incorporation of oral traditions into mainstream media may result in misrepresentation or commodification, so compromising the authenticity and reverence for the culture they embody.

**Contextual Displacement:** Oral traditions are frequently entrenched in certain cultural settings and behaviours. When disseminated via digital channels, essential subtleties and interpretations may be diminished, undermining the tradition's importance.

**Digital Overload:** The vast quantity of internet information might hinder the dissemination of significant cultural materials to appropriate audiences, jeopardising the integrity of vital oral traditions among an abundance of digital material.

- **Opportunities:**

**The conservation of endangered languages including traditions:** Digital media offers a medium for documenting and disseminating endangered languages and customs, enhancing their accessibility for new generations and global audiences. Podcasts, online courses, and translation tools can significantly contribute to revitalisation initiatives.

**Participatory Platforms for Cultural Learning:** Systems that promote cultural engagement—such as centred around communities video platforms, engaging narrative tools, and immersive websites—can sustain the vitality and relevance of oral traditions.

- **Future Role of Emerging Technologies:**

**AI:** AI-powered language translation, the transcription process, and language-learning systems may facilitate the preservation and transmission of oral traditions across several languages, enabling broader audience engagement. Artificial intelligence may assist in reconstructing or simulating threatened languages and dialects, therefore promoting their study and resuscitation.

**Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR):** Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) facilitate immersive experiences, enabling users to interact with oral customs in



more dynamic and contextually enriched settings. They might replicate traditional environments, rituals, or terrains, so augmenting the narrative experience and safeguarding the cultural context.

**3D Holographic Storytelling:** Future advancements may provide real-time narrative in interactive 3D, allowing audiences to connect with cultural narratives in a more immersive manner, so serving as an effective instrument for cultural education as well as preservation.

## **Conclusion**

The incorporation of oral traditions into contemporary media signifies a developing discourse that reconciles preservation with innovation. As conventional storytelling engages with emerging platforms—from social media towards immersive virtual environments—it acquires the capacity to reach wider audiences and adapt to evolving cultural contexts. This confluence also poses difficulties, including cultural appropriation, possible distortion, and the erosion of context. However, when employed judiciously, contemporary media may serve as a formidable ally in preserving these traditions, ensuring their relevance and accessibility. In the contemporary digital era, storytellers serve as both guardians of legacy and intermediaries connecting the past with the present. Their work today includes collection, adaptation, and multimedia interaction, frequently reaching worldwide audiences in many mediums. Modern storytellers, as interpreter of cultural belonging, utilise technology to elevate marginalised voices, modifying classic narratives to align with contemporary contexts. This new position underscores the enduring significance of storytelling in cultivating comprehension, advancing cultural preservation, and motivating future generations.

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