



ISSN Print: 2664-8717
ISSN Online: 2664-8725
Impact Factor: RJIF 8.00
IJRE 2023; 5(1): 97-99
www.englishjournal.net
Received: 11-02-2023
Accepted: 15-03-2023

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Oral expressions: An emphatic means of communication

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2023.v5.i1b.83>

Abstract

How many mothers are lullaby singers? How many fathers read their children bedtime stories today? Man's ability to speak and communicate sets him apart from other creatures. The ability of humans to communicate verbally and their intelligence, or cognitive ability to be aware of and visualize their surroundings, are the two key elements that drive the development of human society. It discusses the evolution of human society as it relates to oral tradition. Today, academics from many different fields of study are very interested in oral tradition. It also offers enormous potential for the study of communication. Without a script, it is a difficult procedure for one generation to pass on information about another's culture, customs, and behaviour through stories. An evaluation of oral tradition as a form of communication is provided in this article. It also addresses the question of whether oral traditions qualify as reliable historical sources.

Keywords: Oral tradition, communication tool, information, historiography, folk traditions, story telling

Introduction

There have been numerous attempts to define the phrase. Oral traditions, according to Vansina, are "records of the present" that also carry "a message from the past." According to Turner, it is one of the areas of literary study that goes back far enough in time to encourage reflection on the key point in prehistoric human history when biological and cultural evolution collided. All verbal testimony that are reported remarks about the past are included in the oral traditions. Henige contends that, "oral tradition as a genre ought to have been passed down over numerous generations and to some part be a community's property. It is the transmission of cultural objects from one member to another, or others," according to Rosenberg. Those items are heard, stored in memory, and, when appropriate, recalled at the moment of subsequent transmission.

There have been discussions about both direct and indirect testimonies frequently. When referring to an eyewitness account, Bauer and Bernheim use the terms "direct testimony" and "indirect statement," respectively. Because both oral tradition and direct testimonies are transmitted verbally, Bernheim classifies oral tradition as a type of direct testimony. However, since each has unique traits, it is preferable to categorize oral traditions and eyewitness accounts separately. Anyone can recount and pass along the events they have witnessed or heard about from their ancestor. However, Bauer and Bernheim's definition of "oral tradition" does not recognize that "oral tradition" that originates from an eyewitness.

Oral Tradition versus Written Tradition

Regarding the interaction between oral and written tradition, there are distinct points of view in the "East" and the "West." Although the focus is mostly on oral communication, Vedic Hindu tradition holds that both oral and written forms of language have existed since the beginning of time. Literacy was not seen as a prerequisite for knowledge in this society, and it is reported that even the famous grammarian Panini was illiterate. Although it is often believed that only "developed" communities or nations have their own sophisticated "written culture," which is a sign of modernity and development, in the context of the West. According to Certaus, writing as a technical tool lost its Christian underpinnings and was repurposed as a result of new tactics of reproduction and capitalization.

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According to Certeau, the "oral heritage" came to represent the backward civilizations of a nation, while the "written tradition" represented the idea of modernity. In this context, oral tradition has been superimposed over written tradition, and an erratic acoustic flow of sound has been overlaid by a visual language architecture. But we cannot deny the existence of oral tradition. In our own culture, the oral tradition is still present, according to Turner, in at least two areas: liturgy and drama. The value of oral tradition is even more clear when written and oral expressions are compared in the context of communication.

Oral Tradition and History

Everyone, whether they are literate or not, engages in a particular type of "oral" behaviour. Oral communication becomes essential for those who are illiterate, and even the majority of those who are literate do not write. As a result, it is a main form of communication and a habit. Regardless of whether they have "written" practices or not, people can recall and pass along various oral traditions that they have or that they heard from their ancestors. In addition to their everyday speech patterns, people have their own myths, legends, recollections, songs, sayings, and proverbs. These oral traditions, however, cannot be passed down precisely from one generation to the next.

Oral traditions hold a distinctive place among the numerous types of historical sources. They are frequently consulted as the most significant sources for the history of non-literate peoples as well as the basis for numerous written texts, particularly those from ancient antiquity and the early middle Ages. Since oral traditions are not written down, they can be passed down from one generation to the next, and their preservation depends on human memory capacity through time, they are historical sources of a social nature. The oral tradition is the primary source that can be used to recreate the past for peoples without a written culture, and even for those who do, many historical sources, even the oldest ones, are based on oral tradition.

Proverbs, poetry, ballads, epics, and long historicized texts are all examples of oral sources that historians may find useful. Vansina urged historians to treat these sources similarly to how they had previously seen written records as having the potential to be used for both direct and indirect historical information. In actuality, the majority of historians and ethnographers use oral tradition as a source for their historical research. India is a good example to illustrate this idea.

People in India still reflect on and contrast life before and after their country's 1947 declaration of independence. Some people have firsthand accounts of the entire transition period since they were there. These types of tales, rhymes, songs, and proverbs can be used to examine how people perceive things and to chronicle the social, political, and cultural histories of a particular culture or country. It will provide different types of historical knowledge if we compare the written text before and after independence. We can also compare how people's oral (linguistic) evolution has changed. In addition, we can contrast how different

generations perceive the same thing, which can be used to analyze how society has changed historically, culturally, or socially.

Beyond Historiography

The oral tradition is a history of language, culture, society, and tradition in and of itself, in addition to being a source for histories. It provides information about how, what, and how people behave in addition to their speech and thought patterns. It implies that several persons may have diverse interpretations of the same occurrences. Yes, the issue of "reliability" would be brought up if there were multiple accounts of a particular event or story. But if we examine ideas like "different social groups use different varieties of language," "language reflect the society or culture in which it is used," "language shapes the society in which it is used," etc., we can see that there may be different versions depending on the period of time, the geographic location, or the language.

It could take the shape of poetry, rhyme, a narrative, a proverb, or something else. In some cases, the "character," "location," or "period" may change depending on the sociocultural value and custom. It is important to look into the possibilities of event distortion everywhere. Nevertheless, oral tradition conveys the "narrative" of the society's present social, cultural, and linguistic structure as well as its historical history. Additionally, it is a history of society, culture, and language.

Oral Traditions of India

Before the development of script, men must have been speaking to one another. Records of events, epics, traditions, tales of bravery, songs, etc. must have been passed down orally from generation to generation even after the advent of script, which must have been the domain of the privileged few. Vedas were only to be learned orally from a Guru in India, never through reading, even after the invention of writing. The requirement for chaste pronunciation and appropriate intonation may be one factor. Another factor can be the narrow-minded desire to keep things private.

On a different level, prior to the invention of devices like the phonograph, record player, tape recorder, etc., music was only retained in a select few people's thoughts and was transmitted to the disciples orally. The Gurus and Sishyas used oral tradition to preserve and transmit not only the lyrics but the complete style. Realizing that well-versed veda pandits formerly existed and still do today who could recite countless lines from memory while also learning new material and applying what they previously knew is astounding. The repertory of a renowned singer who can elaborate a raga also draws everything from his memory while improvising the style and duration for that particular occasion, mood, and audience.

Likewise, illiterates sing rote memorizations of mythical tales, historical events, and other material. There were tunes for every event and every task to lighten the load of the work or just for fun. Oral tradition is used to transmit all of them. This practice is carried on by the custom of making kids memorize things. We should continue the long-standing practice of teaching by rote if we want to maintain the rich heritage of our culture, including our epics, sagas, language, and history. Simply put, publication or recording on their own won't be sufficient.

The Folk Oral Traditions of India

India's traditional oral traditions date back to immemorial antiquity. Through the songs and dances of ordinary rural people, the heroes and heroines of bygone ages are preserved alive. The nomadic tribes that travelled great distances into far-off valleys in search of pastures and waterholes to manage their herds broke out in heartfelt, passionate songs yearning for their loved ones and the sounds, scents, and feelings of their birthplace. In his book *The Discovery of India*, Nehru describes how tribes that had split apart centuries before were able to recognize one another by their songs.

The Ramayana and Mahabharata, two important epics that influenced Indian culture, were passed down and circulated orally. The Suthas chanted and sang with divine fervour about the greatness of its heroes and heroines. The custom of devoted audiences assembling around a Sutha to hear the legendary tales rather than reading the epic poems is still practiced today.

Indian Story Telling

Even though poetry is simpler to recall than prose, the oral tradition in Indian literature was not limited to poetry. Since the very beginning of Indian narrative fiction, Indian story telling has been shaped to suit oral form. Tribal people in India are largely responsible for the country's rich storytelling culture. The tradition of storytelling conjures images of tired travelers huddling around a fire lit on the riverbank sands during a starry night, listening with rapt attention and amusement to tales of wonder and awe of far-off lands inhabited by exotic people, narrated by an elder, in a magical soothing voice with theatrical and lyrical interludes. Each time it is repeated, the stories gathered additional narrative, becoming more circuitous to enhance the drama of the live recitation.

It is quite astounding how the spoken word can capture the listener's attention and carry him away to a world of ideas, dreams, stories, and fables. A professor of mass communication once said that when you say a word, something else is done that as well cannot be undone. There are numerous stories in Indian literature when a phrase was said carelessly or incorrectly, leading to nefarious or even tragic results. Additionally, the power of words can be compared to magic in some ways, but this is not pure magic.

Validity and Reliability

Oral tradition is never trusted by ethnologists, they claim, though it may contain some truth. Ethnologists who have attempted to examine the past of people "without writing" have run into difficulties. They also think that since it is impossible to judge how much truth is in oral tradition, it needs to be thoroughly scrutinized. Undoubtedly, the authenticity and reliability of oral tradition should be investigated, but the same is true of "written material." According to F. Graebner, it is impossible to assess the veracity of oral traditions unless there is some degree of agreement among numerous independent accounts and unless the facts being communicated match those hypothesized by cultural historical studies.

In conclusion, the validity and trustworthiness debate is desirable unless it is framed in a way that seeks to undermine the oral tradition. The scope of examining the oral tradition will actually be expanded in order to explore it as a more authentic source of information with any

provision and instrumentation on its validity and dependability.

Conclusion

Every investigation into "oral traditions" is a component of societal historical research. Even if the historical events are fictitious, every "oral" or "written" tradition contains some historical material. Because we believe that all "written papers" are "genuine" and "reliable," we gather and preserve them all, but we do not want to gather "oral narration." My position is that it is not an issue of technology, time commitment, or cost but rather of our conviction that "written texts" have a greater degree of "truth" than any sort of "oral tradition."

According to academics, all "oral content" may be distorted by individuals, or the accurate account of the past may be muddled during transmission. However, I believe that distorted or muddled oral traditions are still a part of history because they contain "historical," "cultural," "social," and "linguistic" information. All traditions, according to P.C. Lloyd, include some truth. The historian may determine more accurately the directions in which distortion is most likely to have occurred. Because of memory lapses and potential distortionary intentions, oral tradition may contain some confusion and contradictions. But this sort of issue also appears in "written content."

The written word, according to Kaviratna, "can only offer a notion of the actuality; the word is not the fact itself." The reliability of "oral sources" for specific events can be questioned, but they speak to "current social, linguistic, and cultural history," therefore we must record and investigate them. I'll paraphrase Rosenberg: Because the speaker reinforces the specificity of his or her meaning with gesture, expression, intonation, and other self-correcting mechanisms that fixed print is incapable of, oral traditions are both more specific and less ambiguous in communication. Giving oral tradition its rightful importance is the issue at hand, not promoting illiteracy.

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