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### **Cultural Hybridity and Media Influence on Regional Folk Arts and Languages in Selected Indian States**

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#### **Abstract**

This paper examines how satellite television and global digital platforms (OTT/video-sharing/social media) reshape India's regional folk arts and languages through processes of cultural hybridity. Rather than treating media influence as a simple "decline" narrative, the study frames contemporary change as a spectrum ranging from erosion (reduced intergenerational transmission, shrinking performance contexts, language shift) to evolution (new hybrid aesthetics, platform-enabled livelihood opportunities, and digital revitalisation). Drawing on hybridity theory (Bhabha's "third space"), mediatization, and language vitality frameworks, the paper proposes a mixed-method design and offers state-based analytical case discussions from Rajasthan, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Assam/Bihar (illustrative clusters). Findings are synthesised into a model of platform-driven cultural transformation: (i) visibility gain, (ii) aesthetic standardisation, (iii) linguistic accommodation, and (iv) re-localised innovation. The paper concludes with policy and practice recommendations focused on sustainable safeguarding, ethical monetisation, and language-and-arts digital infrastructure.

**Keywords:** cultural hybridity, satellite television, OTT platforms, folk arts, regional languages, India, mediatization, platformisation, language vitality, glocalisation

#### **1. Introduction**

India's cultural diversity is deeply rooted in its regional folk arts and multilingual traditions, which function as key repositories of collective memory, social norms, and local identities. Folk

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music, dance, theatre, oral epics, and indigenous languages are not merely artistic expressions; they are embedded in everyday social life, ritual practices, occupational structures, and systems of knowledge transmission across generations. Historically, these cultural forms have been sustained through community participation and oral traditions rather than through formal institutions (Karve, 1965; Shah, 1998).

The late twentieth century marked a major transformation in this cultural ecosystem with the advent of satellite television in India. Satellite television introduced a competitive, commercialised media environment that prioritised visual spectacle, time-bound formats, and mass appeal. Scholars argue that mass media does not simply represent culture but actively reshapes it by redefining tastes, aspirations, and cultural hierarchies (Tomlinson, 1999). In the Indian context, satellite television has often been associated with cultural homogenisation, where national and global cultural forms gain prominence at the expense of local and folk traditions (Appadurai, 1996).

In the twenty-first century, this transformation has intensified with the rapid expansion of global digital platforms such as OTT streaming services, YouTube, Instagram, and short-video applications. These platforms operate through algorithmic visibility, monetisation logics, and global circulation, creating new opportunities as well as new constraints for regional cultural expressions. On the one hand, digital platforms enable unprecedented visibility for folk artists and regional languages, allowing them to reach diasporic and urban audiences beyond geographical boundaries. On the other hand, they often encourage linguistic standardisation, code-mixing, and aesthetic simplification to maximise reach and engagement, thereby reshaping traditional forms into hybrid, media-friendly versions (Kraidy, 2005).

The concept of **cultural hybridity** provides a useful theoretical lens to understand these processes. Rather than viewing media influence solely as cultural loss or decline, hybridity highlights how local and global elements interact to produce new, negotiated cultural forms within a “third space” (Bhabha, 1994). In India, this hybridity is evident in the adaptation of folk arts for televised reality shows, digital music remixes, and online performances, where

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traditional motifs coexist with global styles and technologies. However, such hybridity is not neutral; it is shaped by power relations, market forces, and unequal access to media resources, which can marginalise smaller linguistic communities and less marketable folk traditions.

Against this background, the present study examines the dynamics of cultural hybridity by analysing how satellite television and global digital platforms influence the decline or evolution of regional folk arts and languages in selected Indian states. By moving beyond a binary framework of tradition versus modernity, the paper seeks to understand the complex ways in which media-driven transformations simultaneously threaten cultural continuity and open new possibilities for cultural reinvention and survival.

## 2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that integrates theories of cultural hybridity, mediatization, globalization, and language vitality. Together, these perspectives help explain how satellite television and global digital platforms simultaneously contribute to the decline, transformation, and reconfiguration of regional folk arts and languages in India.

### 2.1 Cultural Hybridity and the “Third Space”

The concept of **cultural hybridity** is central to understanding contemporary cultural change in postcolonial societies. Hybridity challenges essentialist notions of “pure” or static cultures by emphasizing that cultural forms are continuously produced through interaction, negotiation, and translation between local and global influences (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha’s notion of the “*third space*” highlights how new cultural meanings emerge in spaces where traditional practices intersect with modern media, technologies, and global aesthetics.

In the Indian context, folk arts adapted for satellite television or digital platforms often occupy this third space. Traditional music, dance, or theatre is restructured to fit broadcast formats, shorter attention spans, and commercial expectations, resulting in hybrid forms that blend

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indigenous symbols with global styles. While such hybridity can foster innovation and renewed relevance among younger audiences, it may also dilute ritual depth and linguistic specificity when market considerations override community values (Kraidy, 2005). Thus, hybridity is not merely a cultural outcome but a process shaped by power relations, media ownership, and economic hierarchies.

### 2.2 Mediatization and Cultural Transformation

The theory of **mediatization** posits that media has become a constitutive force in shaping social institutions, cultural practices, and everyday life, rather than serving as a neutral channel of communication (Hjarvard, 2013). Cultural expressions increasingly adapt to media logics such as visual appeal, narrative simplification, repetition, and audience ratings. Satellite television in India exemplifies this process by transforming folk performances into stage-managed, time-bound spectacles designed for mass consumption.

Digital platforms extend mediatization further through algorithmic governance, where visibility and popularity are determined by engagement metrics such as views, likes, and shares. Folk artists and language communities are thus encouraged to modify content—shortening performances, using dominant languages, or adopting popular musical styles—to remain visible within platform economies (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Mediatization theory helps explain why certain folk forms thrive in media spaces while others gradually disappear from public visibility.

### 2.3 Globalization, Glocalization, and Media Flows

Globalization theory provides insight into the transnational circulation of cultural content and symbols. Appadurai's (1996) framework of *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, and *ideoscapes* illustrates how media flows connect local cultural practices to global networks. Satellite television and digital platforms function as powerful mediascapes that expose regional audiences to global narratives, lifestyles, and languages, often reshaping local aspirations and cultural hierarchies.

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At the same time, the concept of **glocalization** highlights how global media forms are localized and reinterpreted within specific cultural contexts (Robertson, 1995). In India, regional-language television channels and OTT platforms demonstrate this process by combining global formats with local narratives and folk elements. However, glocalization may privilege dominant regional languages while marginalizing smaller linguistic communities, thereby producing uneven cultural outcomes.

### 2.4 Language Vitality, Shift, and Cultural Sustainability

To assess the impact of media on regional languages, this study draws on **language vitality and shift theories**, particularly those developed by Fishman (1991). Language vitality depends on factors such as intergenerational transmission, functional domains of use, community attitudes, and institutional support. When satellite television and digital platforms prioritize dominant or standardized languages for wider reach, smaller languages risk being confined to private or symbolic domains, accelerating language shift.

UNESCO's framework on endangered languages emphasizes that language loss is closely linked to the erosion of cultural knowledge, oral traditions, and indigenous worldviews (UNESCO, 2010). However, digital media can also support language revitalization through online archives, community media, and educational content, provided that communities have access to technological and institutional resources (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). This dual role of media—as both a threat and a resource—underscores the need for a balanced analytical approach.

### 2.5 Integrative Framework

By combining cultural hybridity, mediatization, globalization, and language vitality perspectives, this study conceptualizes media influence as a dynamic and contested process. Satellite television and global digital platforms do not uniformly erode regional folk arts and languages; rather, they restructure cultural practices through hybridization, selective visibility, and changing value systems. This integrative framework enables a nuanced understanding of how regional

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cultures in India negotiate continuity and change within an increasingly globalized media environment.

### **3. Literature Review (Selective Synthesis)**

The relationship between media expansion, cultural transformation, and linguistic change has been widely discussed across sociology, cultural studies, media studies, and anthropology. This section reviews key strands of literature relevant to understanding how satellite television and global digital platforms influence regional folk arts and languages in India, while also identifying gaps that the present study seeks to address.

#### **3.1 Folk Arts, Culture, and Social Continuity in India**

Indian scholars have long emphasised that folk arts are integral to social organisation, ritual life, and collective identity rather than merely forms of entertainment. Karve (1965) and Shah (1998) underline that traditions such as folk songs, dances, and oral narratives function as mechanisms of socialisation and cultural continuity within kinship and community structures. Similarly, Dube (1997) highlights how local cultural practices transmit values, gender norms, and historical memory across generations.

However, these studies largely focus on folk traditions within relatively stable social settings and give limited attention to the role of mass media and digital technologies. As a result, they provide an important baseline for understanding “traditional” cultural forms but do not fully address contemporary media-induced transformations.

#### **3.2 Satellite Television and Cultural Homogenisation**

The introduction of satellite television in India during the 1990s marked a turning point in cultural consumption. Early studies argued that satellite TV promoted cultural homogenisation by privileging urban, middle-class lifestyles and standardised linguistic forms (Ninan, 2007). Tomlinson (1999) similarly contends that global media flows tend to reshape local cultures by

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embedding them within dominant symbolic frameworks, often marginalising non-commercial and community-based expressions.

In the Indian context, Appadurai (1996) notes that television creates powerful *mediascapes* that influence aspirations and cultural imagination, especially among youth. Folk arts, when represented on television, are often detached from their ritual and social contexts and repackaged as spectacles or heritage symbols. While some scholars acknowledge that regional television channels provide space for vernacular cultures, they also caution that such representations are frequently selective and shaped by commercial imperatives (Rajagopal, 2001).

### **3.3 Digital Platforms, OTT Media, and Cultural Hybridity**

More recent literature shifts focus from television to digital platforms, particularly OTT services and social media. Scholars argue that digital media intensifies cultural hybridity by enabling constant interaction between global and local cultural forms (Kraudy, 2005). Unlike television, digital platforms allow individual creators and folk artists to bypass traditional gatekeepers, potentially democratising cultural production (Jenkins, 2006).

At the same time, platform-driven cultural production is governed by algorithms that reward popularity, brevity, and monetisation potential. Couldry and Hepp (2017) argue that such “deep mediatization” reshapes cultural practices at a structural level, compelling creators to adapt content to platform logics. Studies on digital culture in India suggest that while folk elements often gain visibility online, they are frequently transformed into hybrid, simplified, or entertainment-oriented forms, raising concerns about cultural dilution and loss of contextual meaning (Athique, 2018).

### **3.4 Media Influence and Language Shift**

Language scholars have extensively examined how socio-economic change, migration, and institutional policies contribute to language shift. Fishman (1991) emphasises that language survival depends on intergenerational transmission and use across multiple social domains.

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Media, particularly television and digital platforms, plays a crucial role in shaping language preferences by assigning prestige and economic value to certain languages over others.

UNESCO (2010) warns that the decline of minority and indigenous languages leads to the erosion of cultural knowledge systems and worldviews. In India, scholars note that while regional languages may benefit from media expansion, smaller dialects and tribal languages often face accelerated marginalisation due to limited representation in mainstream and digital media (Mohanty, 2006). Digital media has the potential to support language revitalisation through online archives and community initiatives, but access inequalities and lack of institutional support limit these possibilities (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006).

### **3.5 Gaps in Existing Literature**

Although existing studies provide valuable insights into media, culture, and language, several gaps remain. First, much of the literature treats folk arts, language shift, and media influence as separate areas of inquiry, with limited integrative analysis. Second, there is a lack of state-specific comparative studies that examine how regional media ecosystems differently affect folk traditions and languages across India. Third, few studies systematically explore the dual role of digital platforms as both agents of cultural erosion and tools for cultural revitalisation.

The present study addresses these gaps by adopting an integrated framework that combines cultural hybridity, mediatization, and language vitality perspectives to analyse the influence of satellite television and global digital platforms on regional folk arts and languages in selected Indian states.

### **4. Research Questions and Objectives**

The present study is anchored in the interdisciplinary concerns of sociology, media studies, and cultural anthropology, and seeks to examine how satellite television and global digital platforms

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reshape regional folk arts and languages in India. Drawing on theories of cultural hybridity, mediatization, and language vitality, this section outlines the core research questions and objectives that guide the analysis (Bhabha, 1994; Hjarvard, 2013; Fishman, 1991).

### 4.1 Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. **How do satellite television and global digital platforms influence the production, representation, and circulation of regional folk arts in selected Indian states?**

This question examines how folk performances are reformulated to align with broadcast formats, platform algorithms, and commercial media logics (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

2. **In what ways do these media platforms affect language use, code-mixing, and intergenerational transmission of regional and indigenous languages?**

This question draws on language shift and vitality theories to assess whether media exposure strengthens or weakens everyday use of regional languages (Fishman, 1991; UNESCO, 2010).

3. **How does media-driven cultural hybridity contribute to the decline, transformation, or revitalisation of folk traditions and linguistic practices?**

This question situates folk arts and languages within the “third space” of cultural hybridity, where local traditions interact with global cultural forms (Bhabha, 1994; Kraidy, 2005).

4. **What variations can be observed across different Indian states in terms of media impact on folk arts and languages?**

This comparative question recognises that media influence is mediated by regional histories, institutional support, and socio-economic conditions (Appadurai, 1996).

5. **What policy and institutional interventions can support the sustainable preservation and evolution of folk arts and languages in the digital age?**

This question connects empirical findings with broader debates on cultural sustainability and language preservation (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006).

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### 4.2 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. **To examine the role of satellite television and global digital platforms in reshaping regional folk arts in selected Indian states.**

This objective focuses on changes in performance formats, aesthetics, and modes of cultural representation influenced by mass and digital media (Hjarvard, 2013).

2. **To analyse the impact of media exposure on regional and indigenous language practices, including language shift, code-mixing, and domain usage.**

This objective is informed by language vitality frameworks that emphasise the importance of intergenerational transmission and functional language domains (Fishman, 1991; UNESCO, 2010).

3. **To explore processes of cultural hybridity emerging from the interaction between traditional folk forms and global media cultures.**

This objective applies hybridity theory to understand how new cultural forms are negotiated and produced within media environments (Bhabha, 1994; Kraidy, 2005).

4. **To compare state-level variations in media influence on folk arts and languages in order to identify region-specific patterns and challenges.**

This objective recognises India's cultural plurality and the uneven effects of globalization and mediatization across regions (Appadurai, 1996).

5. **To propose policy-oriented recommendations for safeguarding and revitalising regional folk arts and languages in the context of expanding digital media.**

This objective aligns with global and national concerns on cultural and linguistic sustainability (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006).

### 5. Methodology (Proposed Mixed-Methods Design)

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The present study adopts a **mixed-method research design** to examine the influence of satellite television and global digital platforms on the decline or evolution of regional folk arts and languages in selected Indian states. A mixed-method approach is particularly suitable for cultural and media research, as it allows for an integrated analysis of structural media influences alongside lived cultural experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). By combining qualitative and quantitative techniques, the study captures both macro-level media trends and micro-level community responses.

### 5.1 Research Design

The study follows a **descriptive-analytical and comparative research design**. It is descriptive in documenting changes in folk arts and language practices, analytical in interpreting these changes through theoretical frameworks of cultural hybridity and mediatization, and comparative in examining variations across selected Indian states. Such a design enables a nuanced understanding of how media influences operate differently across regional and socio-cultural contexts (Bryman, 2016).

### 5.2 Selection of Study Area

The research focuses on **selected Indian states** representing diverse cultural, linguistic, and media ecosystems. States such as Rajasthan, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Assam/Bihar (illustrative clusters) are selected purposively to capture variations in folk traditions, language vitality, and media penetration. Purposive sampling is appropriate when the aim is to study information-rich cases that illuminate complex social phenomena (Patton, 2015).

### 5.3 Data Sources

To ensure methodological triangulation, the study draws upon both **primary and secondary data sources**.

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### 5.3.1 Primary Data

#### 1. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with folk artists, cultural practitioners, media producers, language activists, and policy officials. Interviews explore perceptions of media influence, changes in artistic practices, language use, and livelihood patterns.

Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility while maintaining analytical focus (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

#### 2. Participant Observation

The researcher engages in participant observation during folk performances, festivals, rehearsals, and recorded media productions. This method provides contextual insights into performance settings, audience interactions, and symbolic meanings that may not emerge through interviews alone (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011).

#### 3. Survey of Audiences and Youth

A structured survey is administered to selected households, students, and young audiences to assess media consumption patterns, language preferences, and attitudes toward folk arts. Surveys are useful for identifying broader trends and patterns across social groups (Babbie, 2020).

### 5.3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data includes academic literature, government reports, UNESCO documents, television programme archives, OTT platform catalogues, and digital content (YouTube channels, social media pages) related to regional folk arts and languages. Content from satellite television and digital platforms is analysed to understand representation patterns and linguistic choices (Krippendorff, 2019).

## 5.4 Methods of Data Analysis

#### 1. Qualitative Analysis

Interview transcripts and field notes are analysed using thematic analysis to identify

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recurring themes such as cultural hybridity, media adaptation, language shift, and identity negotiation. Thematic analysis is well suited for interpreting meaning-making processes in cultural research (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **2. Content Analysis**

Television programmes and digital content featuring folk arts are systematically coded for variables such as language use, performance duration, aesthetic modification, and commercial framing. Content analysis enables objective and replicable analysis of media texts (Krippendorff, 2019).

### **3. Comparative Analysis**

Findings across different states are compared to identify similarities and differences in media impact. Comparative analysis highlights region-specific trajectories of cultural change within a shared national media environment (Ragin, 2014).

## **5.5 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity are strictly followed. Participants are informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any stage. Given the cultural significance of folk traditions and indigenous languages, care is taken to avoid misrepresentation or exploitation of community knowledge (Israel & Hay, 2006).

## **5.6 Limitations of the Study**

While the mixed-method approach enhances depth and reliability, the study is limited by time, access to remote communities, and the rapidly changing nature of digital media platforms. Additionally, the focus on selected states may limit the generalisability of findings across all regions of India.

## **6. State-Based Analytical Case Discussions**

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This section presents **state-based analytical discussions** to examine how satellite television and global digital platforms shape the transformation of regional folk arts and language practices in different socio-cultural contexts. Rather than treating media influence as uniform, the analysis highlights **region-specific trajectories of cultural hybridity**, mediated by local histories, institutional support, linguistic vitality, and market integration (Appadurai, 1996; Hjarvard, 2013).

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### 6.1 Rajasthan: Media Visibility, Folk Spectacle, and Linguistic Simplification

Rajasthan is internationally recognised for its rich folk traditions such as *Manganiyar* and *Langa* music, *Kalbeliya* dance, and oral epics like *Pabuji ki Phad*. With the expansion of satellite television and tourism-oriented media, these traditions have gained unprecedented visibility. Folk performances are frequently showcased on television reality shows, cultural festivals broadcast nationally, and digital platforms such as YouTube.

However, media exposure has significantly altered the **form and content** of these traditions. Performances are shortened, rhythms accelerated, and visual spectacle prioritised to suit broadcast time slots and audience attention spans. Language use is often simplified, with artists incorporating Hindi or English phrases to reach wider audiences, leading to the marginalisation of local dialects such as Marwari and Mewari in mediated performances. This reflects the process of **mediatization**, where cultural practices adapt to media logics rather than community norms (Hjarvard, 2013).

At the same time, digital platforms have enabled younger artists to experiment with fusion genres, blending folk music with electronic and popular styles. Such hybrid forms occupy Bhabha's (1994) "third space," simultaneously preserving cultural markers and reconfiguring tradition for global audiences. While this has improved economic opportunities for some performers, it raises concerns about the erosion of ritual depth and intergenerational transmission.

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### 6.2 West Bengal: Folk Theatre, Narrative Transformation, and Cultural Memory

West Bengal has a strong tradition of folk theatre and music, including *Jatra*, *Baul* songs, and *Kirtan*, which historically functioned as vehicles for social critique, spiritual expression, and collective memory. The expansion of satellite television serials and, more recently, OTT platforms has significantly reshaped the cultural landscape of the state.

Televised entertainment and digital content increasingly compete with folk theatre for audiences, especially among younger generations. As a result, folk forms such as *Jatra* have adapted narrative structures, incorporating melodramatic elements and stylistic features drawn from television serials. This process illustrates **cultural convergence**, where traditional narratives are reformulated through dominant media genres (Jenkins, 2006).

Linguistically, while Bengali remains institutionally strong, media-driven standardisation privileges urban, “refined” registers of the language. Rural idioms and performance-based linguistic variations are often diluted in televised or recorded folk performances. Although digital platforms allow for archival and dissemination of folk content, their algorithmic emphasis on entertainment value can reduce folk traditions to cultural symbols rather than living social practices. This supports Kraidy’s (2005) argument that hybridity is shaped by unequal power relations within global media systems.

### 6.3 Tamil Nadu: Regional Media Strength and Controlled Hybridity

Tamil Nadu presents a distinctive case due to its robust regional media industry and strong linguistic identity. Folk forms such as *Therukoothu*, *Karagattam*, and *Villupattu* continue to be embedded in local ritual and community life, while also appearing in television programmes, cinema, and OTT platforms.

Unlike regions where folk traditions are marginalised, Tamil media actively incorporates folk elements into mainstream entertainment. However, this incorporation is often selective and aestheticised. Folk performances are rebranded as heritage segments, detached from their

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original social contexts and reframed for urban audiences. This reflects a process of **controlled hybridity**, where cultural integration occurs within commercially viable boundaries (Kraidy, 2005).

From a linguistic perspective, Tamil enjoys high vitality due to institutional support, education, and media dominance. Yet, smaller folk registers and sub-regional speech varieties face marginalisation within mediated representations. While digital platforms have enabled documentation and revival efforts, especially through community channels and independent creators, access to resources and technical skills remains uneven. This case demonstrates how strong regional language media can protect linguistic dominance while still narrowing internal cultural diversity (Fishman, 1991).

### 6.4 Assam and Bihar: Media Marginalisation and Language Vulnerability

Assam and Bihar represent regions with high linguistic diversity and numerous indigenous and regional languages, many of which lack institutional and media support. Folk traditions in these states are closely tied to agrarian cycles, ecological knowledge, and oral transmission. However, satellite television and digital platforms largely prioritise dominant languages such as Hindi, leading to reduced visibility for local languages and folk expressions.

In these regions, media exposure often accelerates **language shift**, as younger generations associate dominant languages with mobility, employment, and social prestige. According to Fishman (1991), such shifts occur when minority languages lose functional domains, becoming confined to private or symbolic use. UNESCO (2010) similarly warns that media exclusion significantly contributes to language endangerment.

Nevertheless, digital media also presents possibilities for cultural revival. Grassroots initiatives using social media and online archives have begun documenting folk songs, narratives, and rituals. However, these efforts are constrained by limited infrastructure, digital literacy, and financial support. This dual role of media—as both a force of marginalisation and a tool for preservation—underscores the uneven outcomes of cultural hybridity across Indian states.

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### 6.5 Comparative Insights

Across these state-based cases, several comparative patterns emerge:

- Satellite television tends to **standardise and spectacularise** folk traditions, prioritising mass appeal over cultural specificity.
- Digital platforms enable **hybrid experimentation and visibility**, but also impose algorithmic pressures that reshape content.
- Regions with strong linguistic and media institutions (e.g., Tamil Nadu) experience controlled cultural transformation, while linguistically vulnerable regions (e.g., Assam and Bihar) face accelerated marginalisation.

These findings reinforce the argument that cultural hybridity is not a uniform process but a **context-dependent negotiation** shaped by media power, market forces, and local socio-cultural structures (Bhabha, 1994; Appadurai, 1996).

## 7. Discussion: A Model of Media-Driven Cultural Transformation

The state-based case discussions reveal that the influence of satellite television and global digital platforms on regional folk arts and languages in India is neither uniform nor linear. Instead, cultural change unfolds through a complex process of negotiation between local traditions, media logics, market forces, and institutional support. To synthesise these findings, this section proposes a **model of media-driven cultural transformation** that explains how cultural hybridity operates across different regional contexts.

### 7.1 From Transmission to Mediation

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Traditionally, regional folk arts and languages in India were sustained through **direct, community-based transmission**—oral instruction, apprenticeship, ritual participation, and everyday language use. The entry of satellite television disrupted this model by introducing mediated forms of cultural representation. Folk traditions increasingly became objects of viewing rather than participatory practices, shifting cultural authority from community elders to media producers and broadcasters.

This transition reflects the process of **mediatization**, where cultural practices adapt to the institutional and technological logic of media systems (Hjarvard, 2013). As seen across the state cases, folk performances are reformatted into time-bound spectacles, while linguistic practices are modified to suit wider audiences. Consequently, mediation begins to replace transmission as the primary mode through which cultural knowledge circulates.

### 7.2 The Four-Stage Model of Media-Driven Cultural Transformation

Based on the empirical patterns observed, the study proposes a **four-stage model** of media-driven cultural transformation:

#### *1. Visibility and Recognition*

Satellite television and digital platforms initially enhance the visibility of folk arts and regional languages. Performances reach national and global audiences, and cultural forms gain symbolic recognition as markers of regional identity. This stage often generates optimism about cultural revival and economic opportunity (Appadurai, 1996).

#### *2. Standardisation and Spectacularisation*

As folk traditions become integrated into media systems, they undergo standardisation. Performances are shortened, narratives simplified, and visual spectacle prioritised to align with broadcast formats and platform algorithms. Linguistically, dominant or standardised varieties

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replace local dialects to maximise accessibility. This stage reflects the dominance of media logic over cultural logic (Hjarvard, 2013).

### ***3. Hybridity and Negotiation***

In response to standardisation, artists and communities negotiate new forms of expression by blending traditional elements with global genres and technologies. These hybrid forms emerge within what Bhabha (1994) terms the “third space,” where cultural meanings are reworked rather than simply erased. Digital platforms particularly facilitate this stage by enabling experimentation, remixing, and audience interaction (Kraidy, 2005).

### ***4. Divergence: Decline or Revitalisation***

The final stage produces divergent outcomes. In contexts where institutional support, community control, and intergenerational transmission are weak, folk arts and languages experience decline, reduced everyday usage, and symbolic folklorisation. Conversely, where digital tools are combined with community ownership and policy support, mediated hybridity can lead to revitalisation through archives, online pedagogy, and renewed cultural pride (Fishman, 1991; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006).

### **7.3 Media Power, Inequality, and Cultural Outcomes**

The proposed model underscores that media-driven cultural transformation is deeply shaped by **power relations and inequalities**. Not all communities possess equal access to media resources, digital literacy, or institutional backing. As Kraidy (2005) argues, hybridity operates within asymmetrical global systems where dominant cultures and languages exert greater influence. Regions with strong regional media industries and language policies can negotiate hybridity more effectively, while marginalised linguistic communities face accelerated cultural erosion.

Moreover, algorithmic governance on digital platforms intensifies inequality by privileging content that aligns with commercial and engagement-driven metrics. This reinforces a cycle in

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which already-visible cultural forms gain further prominence, while less marketable folk traditions remain invisible (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

### 7.4 Rethinking Decline and Evolution

The findings challenge binary narratives that frame media influence solely in terms of cultural decline or cultural preservation. Instead, media-driven transformation must be understood as a **dynamic continuum**, where decline and evolution coexist. Folk arts may survive as hybrid performances while losing ritual depth; languages may persist symbolically while disappearing from everyday use. Such outcomes highlight the need to distinguish between **symbolic survival** and **functional vitality** (Fishman, 1991; UNESCO, 2010).

### 7.5 Implications of the Model

The proposed model offers a conceptual tool for analysing cultural change in the digital age. It demonstrates that satellite television and global digital platforms are not external forces acting upon culture, but integral components of contemporary cultural ecosystems. Understanding media-driven cultural transformation as a staged, negotiated process allows researchers and policymakers to identify intervention points—particularly at the stages of standardisation and divergence—where supportive measures can prevent decline and foster sustainable cultural evolution.

## 8. Conclusion

Satellite television and global digital platforms are not simply erasing regional folk arts and languages in India; they are reorganising cultural life through hybridity, platform economies, and shifting prestige structures. The same media ecology can generate cultural loss (through standardisation and language shift) and cultural renewal (through visibility, hybrid creativity, and

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digital revitalisation). The decisive factor is governance: who controls representation, how value circulates, and whether communities can convert attention into sustainable cultural transmission. A mixed-method, state-comparative research agenda—grounded in language vitality indicators and platform analysis—can produce actionable evidence for safeguarding India's plural cultural futures.

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