Radio Broadcasting in India: An Analytical Study

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Abstract: Radio is also an effective medium through which millions of people are able to become unified on the basis that they are common recipients of a particular message. In India, broadcasting was introduced by amateur radio clubs in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and Lahore, though even before the clubs launched their ventures, several experimental broadcasts were conducted in Bombay and other cities. Today India has quite a large number of commercial channels. For several decades in India, radio has always been having a top – down approach in the sense, the listeners had no choice except to listen to what was broadcast over AIR and the effects of commercialism also couldn't be underestimated. The industrial and communication revolutions have changed the face of our country. Electronic media captured a vast mass in India and gave a phenomenal growth in the last decade, leading to a huge impact on socio-cultural understandings. Thus, the impact of electronic media, especially radio has to be seen in the background of our tradition and value-based social structure. As India's National Broadcaster and also the premier Public Service Broadcaster, All India Radio (AIR) has been serving to inform, educate and entertain the masses since it's inception, truly living up to its motto – 'Bahujan Hitaya : Bahujan Sukhaya'. One of the largest broadcasting organisations in the world in terms of the number of languages of broadcast, the spectrum of socio-economic and cultural diversity it serves, AIR's home service comprises 479 stations today located across the country, reaching nearly 92% of the country's area and 99.19% of the total population. AIR originates programming in 23 languages and 179 dialects.

Keywords: Radio, Development, Nation, Media, Electronic Media

Communication is central to the success of development and democracy. And Radio is a crucial communication tool that is easy to run and maintain. Radio is the most accessible mass medium of communication in use. It is a particularly effective means of communication in communities where most people can neither read or write, as those people can speak and listen. Its listenership is therefore far more numerous than the readership of newspapers and audience of television, particularly in developing countries. The main aim of this paper is to analyze the development and growth of Radio in India.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RADIO IN INDIA

The Times of India records that a broadcast was transmitted from the roof of its building on August 20, 2021. However, the first licence granted for transmitting a broadcast was given only on February 23, 1922. The Radio Club of Calcutta was perhaps the first amateur radio club to start functioning (in November 1923), followed by Madras Presidency Radio Club which was formed on May 16, 1924, and began broadcasting on July 31, 1924. Today, over 99% of the country's population is covered by AIR's broadcasting services. As years passed by, AIR slowly introduced commercial broadcasts. The Indian television system is one of the most extensive in the world. Television was introduced in India in 1959. A UNESCO grant of $ 20,000 for the purchase of community receivers and a United States offer of some equipment proved much too tempting to resist, and on September, 1959, the Delhi Television Centre went on air. Television broadcasts started from Delhi in September 1959 as part of All India Radio's services. The first major expansion of television in India began in 1972, when a second television station was opened in Bombay.

Media consumption captivates long hours each day in the lives of a typical Indian. Television plays a vital role in the life-style of the people. It allows people to reassert them on the global stage & have their voices heard rather than viewing these as uncomfortable imposition from outside. And in a country with a high rate of illiteracy, TV informs and educates even as it entertains. With over 50 million TV sets and 20 million homes linked to cable with direct-to-home telecast round the corner and 99% of the population being reached by AIR through its regular services. Today under the umbrella of Prasar Bharti,India has established 467 radio stations encompassing 662 radio transmitters, which include 140 MW, 48 SW, and 474 FM transmitters for providing radio broadcasting services in India. As per the official website of AIR, toady there are 467Radio stations across the Country. India is on the threshold of a major infotainment revolution.

Rang De Basanti and Lage Raho Munnabhai, the two trend-setting superhit films have one thing in common. They displayed the power of radio, like never before. Today you don't have to scream about the effectiveness of radio. Television has arrived but the radio has not gone. In India, it has been used extensively as a medium of instruction, for imparting education and spreading public awareness among the people.

MISSION OF ALL INDIA RADIO

All India Radio (AIR) has been serving to inform, educate and entertain the masses since it's inception, truly living up to its motto – 'Bahujan Hitaya: Bahujan Sukhaya'.

OBJECTIVES OF ALL INDIA RADIO

To provide information, education and entertainment, for promoting the welfare and happiness of the masses (Bahujana Hitaya Bahujana Sukhaya), All India Radio strives to :-
   (a) Uphold the unity of the country and the democratic values enshrined in the constitution.
   (b) Present a fair and balanced flow of information of national, regional, local and international interest, including contrasting views, without advocating any opinion or ideology of its own.
   (c) Promote the interest and concerns of the entire nation, being mindful of the need for harmony and understanding within the country and ensuring that the programmes reflect the varied elements which make the composite culture of India.

(d) Produce and transmit varied programmes designed to awaken, inform, enlighten, educate, entertain and enrich all sections of the people.

(e) Produce and transmit programmes relating to developmental activities in all their facets including extension work in agriculture, education, health and family welfare and science & technology.

(f) Serve the rural, illiterate and under-privileged population, keeping in the mind the special needs and interest of the young, social and cultural minorities, the tribal population and those residing in border regions, backward or remote areas.

(g) Promote social justice and combat exploitation, inequality and such evils as untouchability and narrow parochial loyalties.

(h) Serve the rural population, minority communities, women, children, illiterate as well as other weaker and vulnerable sections of the society.

(i) Promote national integration.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTUREOF ALL INDIA RADIO

The Prasar Bharati Board functions at the apex level ensuring formulation and implementation of the policies of the organization and fulfillment of the mandate in terms of the Prasar Bharati Act, 1990. The Executive Member functions as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Corporation. Officers from different streams working in the Prasar Bharati Secretariat assist the CEO, Member (Finance) and Member (Personnel) in integrating actions, operations, plans and policy implementation as well as look after the budget, accounts and general financial matters of the Corporation.

Prasar Bharati Marketing offices located at Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Hyderabad, Guwahati and Jallandhar, look after the marketing activities of both All India Radio and Doordarshan.

Prasar Bharati also has a unified vigilance set up at the headquarters, headed by a Chief Vigilance Officer.

National programmes are broadcast from Delhi for relay by the Capital, Regional and Local Radio Stations. Some of these are the National Programme of Talks and Features in Hindi and English, the National Programmes of Drama and Music. The National Channel of All India Radio located in Delhi broadcasts programmes which are heard on Medium Wave and also on Short Wave. Started on 18th May 1988, this channel works as a night service from 6.50 PM to 6.10 AM the next morning. Broadcasting in Hindi, Urdu and English, the programme composition of the channel has been designed to make it representative of the cultural mosaic and ethos of the country.

The Regional Stations in different States form the middle tier of broadcasting. They originate programmes in the regional languages and dialects. Regional Channels are located in the major linguistic-cultural region of every state. 116 Regional Channels are spread over 29 states & 6 Union Territories including the North-Eastern Service at Shillong that projects the vibrant cultural heritage of the North-Eastern region of this country. The Regional Channels, broadcast largely on the Medium Wave frequency, follow a composite programme pattern comprising of music - classical, light, folk and film, News and Current Affairs, Radio plays, features, Farm and Home programmes, programmes on Health & Family Welfare and programmes for Woman, Children etc.

Local Radio is relatively a newer concept of broadcasting in India. Local radio stations serve small communities, showcase local culture and broadcast area specific programmes for the benefit of the community. The transmission is in the FM mode. The programming is flexible and spontaneous and the stations function as the mouth piece of the local community. At present there are 86 Local Stations spread across the country.

GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT OF RADIO IN INDIA

Broadcasting in India actually began about 13 years before AIR came into existence. In June 1923 the Radio Club of Bombay made the first ever broadcast in the country. This was followed by the setting up of the Calcutta Radio Club five months later. The Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) came into being on July 23, 1927, only to face liquidation in less than three years. In April 1930, the Indian Broadcasting Service, under the Department of Industries and Labour, commenced its operations on an experimental basis. Lionel Fielden was appointed the first Controller of Broadcasting in August 1935. In the following month Akashvani Mysore, a private radio station was set up. On June 8, 1936, the Indian State Broadcasting Service became All India Radio.

The Central News Organisation (CNO) came into existence in August, 1937. In the same year, AIR came under the Department of Communications and four years later came under the Department of Information and Broadcasting. When India attained independence, there were six radio stations in India, at Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Tiruchirapalli and Lucknow. There were three in Pakistan (Peshawar, Lahore and Dacca). AIR then had a coverage of just 2.5 % of the area and 11% of the population. The following year, CNO was split up into two divisions, the News Services Division (NSD) and the External Services Division (ESD). In 1956 the name AKASHVANI was adopted for the National Broadcaster. The Vividh Bharati Service was launched in 1957 with popular film music as its main component.

The phenomenal growth achieved by All India Radio has made it one of the largest media organisations in the world. With a network of 262 radio stations, AIR today is accessible to almost the entire population of the country and nearly 92% of the total area. A broadcasting giant, AIR today broadcasts in 23 languages and 146 dialects catering to a vast spectrum of socio-economically and culturally diverse populace.

COMMUNITY RADIO BROADCASTING IN INDIA

In relation to CR, the term community refers to a collective group or a group of people sharing common characters and common interests. The term community can either be defined as a geographically-based group of persons or as social groups or sections of the people who have common or specific interests. However, common interest in a particular community is quite flexible and can be social, secular, political, economic, and cultural as well.

CR means radio broadcasting with the objective of serving the cause of the community in the service area by involving members of the community in the broadcast of their programmes. Community Radio affords a unique advantage of receiving transmission through low cost, battery-operated portable receiving sets. Community listeners would mean people living in the coverage zone of the particular Community Radio station. Like democracy, CR is, for the people, by the people and of the people. It is a two-way process that empowers people to identify problems and create solutions. CR enables the most vulnerable to participate in decisions for positive change in their lives. Through CR

people can collaborate to produce and broadcast programme that focus on local concerns. Dynamic, this medium is autonomous and non commercial relying on the communities it serves for survival. In real sense Community Radio is truly a medium for effective grassroots level communication. CR strengthens the democratic system and sends this voice of the masses across million of people in the world. In fact CR gives a boost to socially useful and productive work and multipurpose projects that form the basic infrastructure of a country's progress. According to Partridge the term 'community radio' was first coined by Powell in1965 in a leaflet entitled Possibilities for Local Radio. However, the idea of locally embedded small-scale radio, produced and controlled by citizens had been around for a while (for instance US amateur broadcasters before World War I). Localism is considered to be one of the defining characteristics of CR and media.

Today, community media is defined as: grassroots or locally oriented media access initiatives predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content, dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, and committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity.

Howley's definition points, among others, to localism as one of the defining characteristics of community media and radio. He also associates community media with a wider set of notions and practices, such as participation by communities in their own media, and producing content for the communities they serve.[5] Community media is thus seen to be intrinsically linked to forms of internal basic democratic procedures, to practices of self management, and to the production of alternative non-mainstream formats and content. In this regard, Prehn's emphasis on participation as involving people directly in station programming, administration and policyactivities' is highly relevant. From this perspective, community radio contributes both to external pluralism by being a different voice among public and commercial broadcasters, and to internal pluralism by being basic democratic and providing a platform for a diversity of voices and styles, often lacking in mainstream media.

WORLDWIDE COMMUNITY RADIO MOVEMENT

The first two experiments in CR broadcasting in the world go back a little over 50 years in Latin America. Poverty and social injustice were the main factors stimulating such projects. The year 1947 saw the appearance in Bolivia of Radio de los Mineros (Miners' Radio Station) and in Colombia of Radio Sutatenza. The main purpose of the first of these stations was to unite the mining community in the struggle to obtain better and fairer working conditions. For its part, Radio Sutatenza, although inspired by the objective of supporting the community of peasant farmers, was neither owned nor run by them. It was set up by Father Joaquín Salcedo, who made the first systematic attempt to educate through the use of radio, a venture that later led to the establishment of the Latin American Association for Radio Education (ALER) was the first Latin American Association for Educational radio.

Although the CR movement began in Latin America, it was in Europe that it became a vital factor and an alternative to the major State and private radio corporations. During the 1960s and 1970s the huge increase in the number of pirate radio stations in Western Europe led governments and national broadcasting systems to introduce officially authorized local radio stations.In Africa the establishment of CR stations turned into a social movement after the disappearance of the apartheid regime in South Africa. In Asia the various pressure groups that had encouraged the growth of CR broadcasting in various parts of the world were less in evidence. Consequently, it was UNESCO and other organizations that took the initiative to assist the establishment of CR stations in that continent.

In some cases, in a number of Asian countries it was the broadcasting organization that initially set up community radio services.

Communication is central to the success of developments and democracy and CR is a highly effective and convenient communication tool that is easy to run and maintain. It is a particularly effective means of communication in communities where most people cannot read or write, but can speak and listen. Its listenership is therefore much broader than the readership of newspapers and television viewers particularly in developing countries like India where literacy rate is still low. CR can play a vital role in the development and democratization of a society by enabling communities to articulate their experiences and to critically examine the issues, processes and policies affecting their lives. This can be done by educating and mobilizing communities around development initiatives and strategies that will result in an enhanced life for the listeners. Access to media and Information Communication Technologies (ICT) should not be viewed as an end in itself but as a means to the ultimate goal of social inclusion. CR helps the remotest communities to integrate into the national and global economies, and the development of knowledge-based economies. CR is known to improve governance by enabling people to hold local governments to account for delivery of services. It brings out the best in community participation in development.

COMMUNITY RADIO AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS

Generally, people affiliated with CR either as station management, programmers, listeners, or donors, believe that CR works. Programming is generally interesting, and offers viable alternatives to mass-market commercial radio in most license areas. The public interest is often served with programme offerings in health, education, agriculture, culture, politics or financial management, to name a few. Listeners seem to like and appreciate CR stations especially when subjects that they care about are aired. In short, within the development field, CR is widely viewed as a successful approach. In a sense, the growth and spread of CR stations throughout the world can be considered a movement of social ideas and processes of development. Community based radio stations, when effectively managed by local committees, can demonstrate key principles of local ownership, elevating local voices, community participation in decisions affecting them and collective decision-making. Each of these is essential for good government and democratic values to flourish. CR stations provide venues for less frequently heard small voices to be heard in larger big media. They provide ways of organizing people living together in the same defined geographic area – or community of interest -- around their common values and beliefs.

- As CR is a participatory process that aids development and social progress, its assessment contain two components:
- Assessment of the effectiveness of the process of delivering CR (station management, operation and programming), and
- Assessment of the effectiveness of CR stations in contributing to social progress of the communities in which they are broadcasting, and analysis of the impact of such contributions.

Currently, those community media organizations that undertake assessments, often termed evaluations, primarily look at the perceived impact of CR programming on listeners and the perceived views of their listeners. What is most often lacking, however, is a systematic look at the entire process of delivering CR and its programming – an analysis that must be done with the heavy involvement of the intended beneficiaries or those from the affected communities. This perspective looks at assessment

as a central component of accountability to the communities, which CR stations serve. Unless such systems are well developed, accountability can be compromised.

CONCLUSION

Communication is central to the success of development and democracy. And Radio is a crucial communication tool that is easy to run and maintain. Radio is the most accessible mass medium of communication in use. It is a particularly effective means of communication in communities where most people can neither read nor write, as those people can speak and listen. Its listenership is therefore far more numerous than the readership of newspapers and audience of television, particularly in developing countries. Technically, its production costs are significantly lower than those of most printed or video community media. Likewise, its reception is easier and more affordable than that of community video or television, and leaves out the distribution nightmares of community publications. "Radio opens traditional African speech to new spaces, to the conquest of time, to renewed ties of friendship. Speech thus becomes a component that constitutes the world. It should come as no surprise, then, that as the population demands its most basic rights radio is becoming the sign of new times, despite the fact that ancient times may not completely have been left behind. Radio, promoter of a school of national languages, of a technical school based on African expertise; radio, educator and strengthener of women's often silenced voices, should not be a utopia but rather an effective on-air strategy" (Opening Speech by President, AMARC, Dakar, Senegal, Jan. 24, 1995).

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