

CHAPTER – I

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Introduction:

In India the nature of life in most rural communities is that of subsistence. The communities need basic life necessities such as food, shelter and clothing. It is therefore important that the agriculture sector be developed in order to develop the rural areas. The pivotal role of rural broadcasting therefore becomes handy.

Broadcasting :

In communication, such as radio and television, broadcasting means sending information such as television shows or music electronically to a large audience. The information is sent through the air in radio waves, through a wire, or by a satellite, and then the television viewers or radio listeners pick up the signal using their television sets and radio receivers.

Types of broadcasters :

Public broadcasters :

Many countries have public broadcasters, which get funding from the government to broadcast television shows and radio programs. Examples of public broadcasters include the BBC in Britain, NHK in Japan, and the CBC in Canada. Public broadcasters make programs that the private companies are not interested in making, such as children's educational shows, documentaries and public affair shows about current issues. (*Broadcasting – Simple English Wikipedi , the free encyclopedia*)

Private broadcasters :

There are also private broadcasting companies. These are companies that broadcast television and radio programs. To make money, private broadcasting companies sell advertisements called commercials. *(ibid :p1)*

Community broadcasters :

A third type of broadcaster is the community broadcasters. There are community television and community radio stations.

Community television stations are often provided on cable networks. Community television stations usually have shows about local issues and community event. Some community television stations broadcast community cultural activities, such as musical performances or town hall meetings.

Community radio stations play music and have public affair shows about community issues, community radio stations are usually small organizations that are run by volunteers. Community radio station often get their funding (money) from local government, local universities and from donations by listeners. Some community radio station also have poetry reading by local poets, or performances by musicians or singers. Community radio stations are owned by tribals, peasants and other cultural groups to fulfill their socio-economic needs and protect their cultural identity in terms of their language, festivals, customs etc. *(ibid:p1)*

The Role of Community Media :

Local and community-based media have become recognized as having a particular role to play for people and communities facing poverty, exclusion and marginalisation. They can assist in providing

access to information and voice, including local and vernacular languages. They can reinforce traditional forms of communication such as storytelling, group discussion and theatre and they can enable grassroots participation in policy-making and democracy. They use technologies which are appropriate and affordable. In doing so, they reach out to the most remote communities and to people from all walks of life. *(Steve Buckley, 2006)*

There are two dominant broadcasting forms in the world today, differentiated by public or private ownership.

There are some good models of publicly owned broadcasting with independent governance and editorial arrangements and a range of public interest programming. But many state owned public media are still not sufficiently independent of the government. Instead of truly serving the public interest they remain the instrument of the government in power. Instead of dialogue with their audience they maintain a one – way mode of communication. *(ibid)*

There is almost no country in the world today that is not, by one means or another, also reached by private commercial media whether through the liberalisation of broadcast licensing or through the rapid growth of satellite services. Private commercial media can contribute to the plurality of choice but they tend to pay little attention to the needs and concerns of the poorer sections of society. In many countries growing concentration of ownership has had the effect of reducing the diversity of private media. Media concentration has allowed powerful media corporations to emerge that wield enormous . Political influence while remaining accountable only to their private owners and the market place.*(ibid)*

Today, a third form of media, community broadcasting, has emerged from civil society to find a place alongside the established

public and private media. Community broadcasting can be considered a third sector of the media landscape- independent, with social and not commercial objectives.

Community broadcasting has developed in response to the needs of grassroots social movements and community- based organisations to find an accessible and affordable means to express their own issues, concerns, cultures and languages, and to create an alternative to the state-owned public broadcaster and the growth of private commercial media.*(ibid)*

The existence and the practice of community broadcasting is an expression of a more participatory attitude to democracy and the growth of strong and dynamic civil society organisations. It can be considered a form of public service broadcasting, but this is a public service broadcasting not from the top-down, but rather from the grassroots-up. *(ibid)*

What is Community Radio?

Community radio, rural radio, cooperative radio, participatory radio, free radio, alternative, popular, educational radio. If the radio stations, networks and production groups that make up the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters refer to themselves by a variety of names, then their practices and profiles are even more varied. Some are musical, some militant and some mix music and militancy. They are located in isolated rural villages and in the heart of the largest cities in the world. Their signals may reach only a kilometer, cover a whole country or be carried via shortwave to other parts of the world.

Some stations are owned by not - for - profit groups or by cooperatives whose members are the listeners themselves. Other are

owned by students, universities, municipalities, churches or trade unions. There are stations financed by donations from listeners, by international development agencies, by advertising and by governments. (*Waves for Freedom', Report on the Sixth World Conference of Community Radio Broadcasters, Dakar, Senegal, January 23-29, 1995*)

The historical philosophy of community radio is to use this medium as the voice of the voiceless, the mouth piece of oppressed people and generally as a tool for development. (*AMARC Africa and Panos Southern Africa, 1998.*)

Community radio is defined as having three aspects : non-profit making community ownership and control and community participation. (*ibid*)

It should be made clear that community radio is not about doing something for the community but about the community doing something for itself, i.e. owning and controlling its own means of communication. (*ibid*)

In Latin America, there are approximately one thousand radio stations that can be considered community, educational, grassroots or civic radio stations. They are characterized by their political objectives of social change, their search for a fair system that takes into account human rights, and makes power accessible to the masses and open to their participation. They can also be recognized by the fact that they are non-profit. This does not prevent them from growing and seeking a place in the market. (*AMARC y Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1998.*)

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Community and civic radio incorporates new languages, new formats, other sounds, types of music, voices. It brings other ways of talking, new relationships with listeners, ways of asking and answering questions, ways of making demands and pressuring the authorities. (*ibid*)

Community radio means radio of the community, for the community, about the community and by the community. There is wide participation from regular community members with respect to management and production of programs. This involvement of community members distinguishes it from the dominant commercial media in the Phillipines that are operated for PPPP – profit, propaganda, power, politics and privilege. Serving the big P (people or public) is a token gesture mainly to justify existence in the government bureaucratic licensing procedures.

Stations are collectively operated by the community people. Stations are dedicated to development, education and people's empowerment. Stations adhere to the principles of democracy and participation. (*TAMBULI-Communication Project Phillipines*)

Over the years, community radio has become an essential tool for community development. People can recognize themselves and identify with community radio, in addition to communicating among themselves.

Community radio is a cultural broadcast mechanism that adapts perfectly to the context of French Canadians. Its airwaves reflect the cultural reality :songs, music, writing of the French – speaking population it serves. Community radio stations are the best standard-

bearers of our culture. [*Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada, ARC, Canada.*]

The tone of each community radio station is well modulated in the image of its listeners. The important thing is to seek out differences.

Community radio is an element of closeness, a bridge, a step toward the other, not to make the other like us, but to have him become what he is. It is not a question of having more but of being, that is the real mission of community radio stations in Canada. Isn't the most meaningful definition of culture the act of making people aware of the greatness they possess? (*ibid*)

Firstly, Community Radio is characterised by the active participation of the community in the process of creating news, information, entertainment and culturally relevant material, with an emphasis on local issues and concerns. With training, local producers can create programmes using local voices. The community can also actively participate in the management of the station and have a say in the scheduling and content of the programmes.

Secondly, it is essentially a non-profit enterprise. In these days of highly commercialised broadcasting, the ethos of community radio remains independent and responsible to serve the community, not the advertiser. As the station is owned by the community, it also maintains some responsibility in the running of the station.

Thirdly, community radio programming is designed by the community, to improve social conditions and the quality of its cultural life. The community itself decides what its priorities and needs are in terms of information provision. (*VOICES,India.*)

Community radio is low cost, easy to operate, reaches all members of the community in their own languages and, as a local, grass-

root media, it maximizes the potential for development to be drawn from sharing information, knowledge and skills within the community.

Community radio allows members of a community to gain access to information, education and entertainment and offers an opportunity for the community to participate actively in the media as planners, producers and performers. It is the means of expression of the community rather than for the community. It is directed specifically to people of community and to their information needs.

Community participation is a fundamental characteristic of community radio—live public shows, village debates and participation in the actual management of the radio station are just a few examples. This approach empowers people to participate in the dialogue and decision-making processes essential for them to control their own economic, social and cultural environment and play an active part in development activities.

Community radio is not only for well-dressed, eloquent and highly educated people. To be meaningful, radio must be accessible to every man, woman or child who has an idea to share, a talent to manifest, a grievance to let out or a joy to express.

The Aim of UNESCO'S Community Programme :

Community radio has a special place in UNESCO's programmes. The aim of UNESCO's community programme is to address crucial social issues at a community level, such as poverty and social exclusion, empower marginalized, rural groups and catalyze democratic processes and development efforts.

The History of Community Radio in India :

India does not only have a long history of radio broadcasting, one can also find vestiges of a history of Community Radio as well. Under British colonial rule, amateur broadcasting started early in three Indian cities way back in 1923, when the Indian Broadcasting Corporation was set up. During this time, community radio appeared in different forms: decentralized, rural, local, and merely experimental. One of these experiments in rural broadcasting was conducted in 1932 by Rural Reconstruction Commissioner Frederick Brayne in Lohore. Based on the experience of this effort, Charles Strickland, former Registrar of Indian Friendly Societies, suggested the setting up of district radio stations for rural development in a presentation made to the East India Society in London in 1933. These stations should use small transmitters, broadcast folk songs and folk theatre in local dialects and provide news on agricultural issues. Not many of these experiments survived and if they did, they were soon to be swallowed by the then established national broadcasting service and lost their valuable social goals.

In 1935, the designation Indian State Broadcasting Service was changed to All India Radio, a name still used for the state – run monopoly broadcasting organization. The alternative name for this semi – commercial operation of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting mainly used within India since 1957 is Akashvani. From only six stations at the time of independence, All India Radio's network had expanded by the mid 1990s to 146 AM stations plus a National Channel, the integrated North-East Service (aimed at tribal groups in northeast India), and External Service.

It was not until 1956 that another milestone in the development of community radio was reached: in this year, Farm Radio Forums were set up in 150 villages across five districts of the western

Indian state of Maharashtra. Based on a Canadian model, it was a collaborative effort between All India Radio and UNESCO. These worked as follows : with the support of community leaders and field workers, selected village farmers would meet at an appointed hour, listen to the radio broadcast collectively via a community radio set and then discuss the content. This was moderated by a convener. The programming was to “ place emphasis on the practical aspects of rural life, and stimulate lively discussions among the listeners without raising controversial political issues” (*Mathur and Neurath, 1959 : 22*). The problem consisted in the farmers only being entitled to making occasional suggestions. Hence, they had only small influence on the anyway uncritical content. The structure of the experiment itself was based on the approach that rural needs were best understood by those outside of the milieu and necessary information injected into these less developed regions would be most suitable for the lives of the inhabitants.

During the Green Revolution in the 1960s, there was a sudden, ubiquitous need for information. Agricultural practices in India had largely remained unchanged for generations. Traditional forms of agriculture with a strong component of subsistence farming had been the norm. With the coming of new techniques and technology that later propelled the Green Revolution came the imperative of introducing fundamental changes into these basic practices. In response to the need for information, All India Radio began in 1966 to broadcast for farmers (*Page and Crawley, 2001:p328*). Though programming for farmers remains important in the organizational objectives of All India Radio even today, at best the small district stations continue “broadcasting in local languages and re-broadcasting national programmes to local audiences” (*Page and Crawley, 2001:p329*) and therefore can hardly be called community radio stations. One fundamental problem remaining is

that these supposedly rural, community oriented programmes are thrown at the audience with almost no “consultations between the people and the producers of the programmes, and no cooperation between the producers and the change agents in the rural areas who know and understand local conditions ” (*Moemeka, 1981:p66*)

In India, the campaign to legitimise community radio began in the mid 1990s. However, in a ruling given in early 1995, India’s Supreme Court declared that “airwaves are public property”. Due to that some groups across the country got inspiration, but to begin with, only educational (campus) radio stations were allowed, under somewhat stringent conditions.

Anna FM is India’s first campus ‘community’ radio, launched on 1 February 2004, which is run by Educational and Multimedia Research Centre, and all programmes are produced by the students of Media Sciences at Anna University.

On 16 November 2006, the Government of India notified a new Community Radio Policy which permits NGOs and other civil society organizations to own and operate community radio stations. Under the new policy, any not-for-profit ‘legal entity’—except individuals, political parties and their affiliate’s criminal and banned organizations—can apply for a community radio license. Central funding is not available for such stations, and there are stringent restrictions on fundraising from other sources. Only organisations that are registered for a minimum of three years old and with a ‘proven’ track record of local community service can apply. License conditions implicitly favour well- funded stations as against inexpensive low power operations, several of which (*e.g. mana Radio in Andhra and Raghav FM in Bihar*) ran successful on shoe-string budgets before the imposition of any community radio policy.

The licence entitles them to operate a 100 watt (ERP) radio station, with a coverage of approximately 12 kilometers radius. A maximum antenna height of 30 meters is allowed. Community radio stations are expected to produce at least 50% of their programmes locally, as far as possible in the local language or dialect. The stress is on developmental programming, though there is no explicit ban on entertainment. News programmes are banned on community radio in India, as also on commercial FM radio. Five minutes of advertising per hour is allowed. Sponsored programs are not allowed except when the program is sponsored by the Government at the Centre or State.

(Community radio – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

Government's Policy Objective :

The government expects a number of benefits to flow from the successful operation of community radio stations across the country.

Some of these expectations are :

1. Enhancing participation of people in the development process.
2. Capacity- building, especially in rural areas, through education.
3. Providing opportunities to people to upgrade their skills and enhance their creative talent.
4. Creating rural networks for cottage and village industries.
5. Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions.
6. Bringing within easy reach of the rural population, topical information in areas of agriculture, social welfare, education, health and environment.

(Webel Mediatronics Limited, Community Radio System – a WML's perspective)

Examples of Community Radio in India :

The Deccan Development Society (DDS) in the South has been working with dalit (untouchable) women in the Medak district of Andhra Pradesh State for the last two decades. The DDS – with the support of UNESCO / IPDC- helped them to set up a well – designed radio station as part of unique ‘Green’ school campus in Machnoor village in Zaheerabad Mandal. This station is managed by ‘General’ Narsamma and Algole Narsamma, young women from daily – wage families of Machnoor.

In the absence of a license to broadcast, their community radio programmes are recorded on audio cassettes and distributed to listeners group in many villages where DDS works.

Namma Dhwani (Our Voice) was started in 2000 in Karnataka to empower the villagers by producing locally relevant information through community based audio and internet technologies. A partnership was established between two NGOs–VOICES and MYRADA –and the poor farmer community. Namma Dhawani is a community information and media centre that is supported by UNESCO/ IPDC (International Programme for the Development of Communication).The multi-media centre in Budikote, Karnataka has a cable audio station, with an accompanying computer centre. The local community produces and cablecasts its own radio programmes right into their homes in the village everyday. Namma Dhwani also reaches three other villages in the region through loudspeaker narrowcasting . (*Jocelyne Josiah, UNESCO, New Delhi.*)

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