



Community Radio and Development

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Abstract: *Community radio is a medium of expressing and sharing ideas, thoughts, information, feelings, views, skills, problems and prospects of weaker, disadvantaged, poor and hard to reach with the mainstream population in remote area. As the media of grass root level people of the disadvantaged areas, Community radio is gaining popularity in recent years and it has opened a new arena for both the policy makers as well as community people to be involved in the development process of their community. The Community Radio can help us in addressing social, economic, political, educational, cultural, health and sanitation related issues more effectively and strategically. The objective of this research paper to explore the role of Community Radio in Development.*

ISSN : 2348-5612 © URR



Keywords: *Community radio, Community Development, disadvantaged and vulnerable group, Remote and rural areas.*

Radio is a powerful medium of mass communication in. It has played a vital role in National Development. Radio is a cheaper medium of communication and it provides Local, National and International information to Audience. According to Mahatma Gandhi, “*This (i.e. the Radio) is a miraculous power. I see Shakti, the miraculous power of God*”.¹

While radio’s potential reach in India, at least in aggregative terms, for exceeds that of any other mass medium, the emergence of television has reduced radio’s reduced once prominent position. In 2000, only 20 percent of the Indian population listened to radio regularly; some 50 percent watched television. However, radio still holds enormous potential to carry development messages to poor, rural Indian households which cannot afford television sets.²

According to Ashish Sen, “In terms of reach and access, India’s print and broadcast media is strong: Approximately 60% of urban Indians and 25% of rural Indians read print media on a regular basis, and 96% of the country is reached by radio”.. The high degree of commercialization of news channels and a detrimentally increasing influence of a select few on the kind and the nature of issues highlighted, the never-ending obsession with the casual effect of policies on the privileged class delivers a partial and to an extent, deceptive information to the people. The issue of paid news misleading the electorates, and of the media being used as a tool for propaganda and other such impediments calls for a different manifestation of the media in which it should play a very neutral, growth-centric role as in the case of community media. In this era of growing inclination towards market-driven consumerist and commercial ideals, the role of community media at large becomes significantly pertinent and sacrosanct. An essential component of community media is community radio.

Community radio is a type of radio service that caters to the interests of a certain area, broadcasting content that is popular to a local audience but which may often be overlooked by commercial or mass-media broadcasters. Modern-day community radio stations often serve their listeners by offering a variety of content that is not necessarily provided by the larger commercial radio stations. Community radio outlets may carry news and information programming geared toward the local area. Two distinct approaches to community radio can be discerned. One stresses service or community mindedness, a focus on what the station can do for the community. The other stresses involvement and participation by the listener. Community radio stations are sometimes specialist music stations, or they might strongly



represent local music and arts. Others might broadcast talks and current affairs programs representing alternative.

In India, community radio began in the mid 1990s, soon after the Supreme Court of India ruled in its judgment of February 1995 that "airwaves are public property". This came as an inspiration to groups across the country, but to begin with, only educational (campus) radio stations were allowed, under somewhat stringent conditions. In 2015 there were 179 community radio stations in India.

The Potential of Community Radio:

The potential of community radio to bring about social change is not a matter of mere observation but, as Population Media Center President William Ryerson demonstrated,

The importance of community media for community empowerment and democratization is well known. And voice based media are especially relevant in the Indian context, given the poor literacy levels in rural areas. However, despite radio being an efficient channel for voice-based community media, communities and independent organizations were forbidden to set up their own radio stations³

'Radio stations that practice radio broadcasting as a community service and see communication as a universal right. That seek to build a common path to support one another and strengthen our people's communication. Radio stations that see themselves as an integral part of the community in which they participate. As media, they develop pluralistic and participatory communication that is open to the need for expression of the social and cultural sectors with less access to exclusively commercial media. That exercise the right to communication and, particularly, the right to information. That exercise radio broadcasting as a service, and not simply as a commercially profitable activity.' (*Federation Argentina de Radios Comunitarias, FARCO. Argentina defines Community Radio*)

It is easily says that community people can active participate in development communication process through their local dialect, cultural values, traditions, customs. They participate in the process of creating news, information, entertainment and culturally relevant material, with an emphasis on local issues and concerns. 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.

Community radio in the commercially dominated media system community radio means radio in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community. There is a 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 Philippines that are operated for PPPP - profit, propaganda, power, politics, privilege, etc. Serving the big P (people or public) is a token gesture mainly to justify existence in the government bureaucratic licensing procedures. Stations collectively operated by the community people. Stations dedicated to development, education and people empowerment. Stations which adhere to the principles of democracy and participation.

(TAMBULI - Communication Project. Philippines.)

Need and Importance of Community Radio: Communication has a limited scope when the units involved in decision making are very large in size and scale but small in numbers and when the units involved in their implementation to whom the decisions and the know how concerning these decisions have to be transmitted are also large in size but small in numbers. But now the process of making plan requires adjustment to regional and local representations and specificities at the micro level and that too in country of sub continental size and diversity.



Community radio derives its genesis from the basic principles of democracy necessarily entailing equality and active participation in political, governmental, administrative process and right of freedom of speech and thought of expression. The role of any medium of mass communication, as is self-explanatory by its very name is to reach out to people but in its actual realization; generally the lower echelons of human civilization are always left out. One may argue that the media is vigilant enough to report a number of issues pertaining to the deprived or the socially marginalized of for that matter the tribal groups but a juxtaposition of their demographic occurrence with the quantum of space they demand in daily news shows the grave discrepancy involved. Community radio therefore caters to the interest of such type of groups. It is thus obvious to the point of banality that the low level of literacy rates and even lower awareness towards the society is definitely a handicap for them. It is therefore, quite difficult for these people to connect to the larger framework of national and international issues of importance shown in the news channels. Happening surround him, in his own community will definitely be intelligible to them. Community radio then emerges out as the most viable option considering the fact that most of them would not be in a position to use the print form of community media. Social awareness programmes and health care measures can also be articulated to the people by means of community media. Information on traffic and weather conditions, information on academic events, public announcements pertaining to utilities like electricity and water supply, disaster warnings and health alerts are also made available by means of community radio. Also the coverage of various cultural events and regional festivals propagates the indigenous culture and tradition of the community and substantiates the enchanting individuality any community upholds. Ideologically, looking through the perspective of the marginalized, this kind of active inclusion instills in them a sense of belonging to the larger community, empowers them and also imbues them with a feeling of self-confidence ushering in hope in their hitherto directionless lives.

(Community Radio: The Key To Proper Rural Development In India, Sakshi Abroi)⁴

Thus, community radio is a source of effective communication. It has a different kind of relationship with its community, and the community has, and should have, an almost proprietary feeling about its local station, that it cannot have about a national network.

Conclusively, it is time that a community oriented communication system is suited to the nation. Which is characterized by the supreme importance of local communities in the Indian social and economic and educational structure. According to P.C. Joshi, “The community radio will have pride of place as and when the communication priorities are also reformulated in response to the community principle which is so basic to Indian cultural tradition.”⁵

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