

## **THE REVOLUTIONARY JOURNEY OF COMMUNITY RADIO AND ITS ROLE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION IN INDIA**

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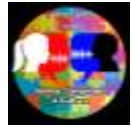
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**Abstract:** *In India Community radio service mainly belongs to non-profit and non-commercial organizations whose main aim remains to serve a local area audience using the class –D small bandwidth transmitters. Until the year 2002 Community radio service was not legalized in our country India. But a wide range of community members including academia, social sectors .non-government organizations tried to convince the Government to legalize community radio service for the betterment of the society only. Basically community radio provides its service to a local range of 10 Km approximately. The most important and crucial turning point in the journey of community radio movement in India was in 1995 when the honourable Supreme Court of India said in a ruling that, “Airwaves are a public property and they must be used for public good.” The court also added reasonable restrictions along with the saying and added reasonable restrictions. Community radio provides a platform for the development of the people of the community they are working in. They create a bridge between the government authorities and the rural population and listeners to whom much information reaches through these CR stations. Community Radio indeed plays an important role where the members of the community takes active part in the programs and two way participatory communication takes place. The CR stations create awareness on different social, cultural, development issues to the members of these communities. This research paper aims to find and analyze the role played by Community Radio in development communication in India especially among the rural areas, the poor and marginalized sections of the society.*

**Keywords:** *Community Radio, Development Communication, Rural Development, Participatory Communication, Socio-cultural, NGOs, Community, Education, Women Empowerment.*

### **Introduction**

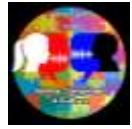
Community radio is indeed a special and important branch of radio service that has a very important role in our society. Community radio caters its service to a very specific local



audience. In India Community radio service mainly belongs to non-profit and non-commercial organizations whose main aim remains to serve a local area audience using the class –D small bandwidth transmitters. Until the year 2002 Community radio service was not legalized in our country India. But a wide range of community members including academia, social sectors .non-government organizations tried to convince the Government to legalize community radio service for the betterment of the society only. Basically community radio provides its service to a local range of 10 Km approximately. The most important and crucial turning point in the journey of community radio movement in India was in 1995 when the honourable Supreme Court of India said in a ruling that, “Airwaves are a public property and they must be used for public good.” The court also added reasonable restrictions along with the saying and added reasonable restrictions. The court also added that according to Article 19, which is the Freedom of Speech and Expression, the right to receiving and distributing information. The civil society groups continuously after this ruling by the Supreme Court pressed for legalizing Community Radio in India. Soon after, The Bangalore Declaration was formulated and adopted by this Civil society groups where the voiced for third tier that is community radio for the society’s needs. It was then in 2002 the Patashpur Declaration formulated and adopted similarly by these active groups. In the Patashpur Declaration the groups also mentioned that Community radio shall be for the community, non-commercial and non-profit and for a local audience in need. Both these two declarations helped a lot in the Community Radio movement in India, which was indeed an important part in history of Radio service.

### **Government Policy**

It was in December 2002, when the then NDA government approved the licensing policy for Community radio. But, in the first go the availability was granted only to educational institutions like IITs and IIMs. Since then, the civil society groups kept on with their movement for community radio. On 1<sup>st</sup> February 2004, India’s first campus and “Community Radio” station was established in the form of Anna FM by Anna University students. Still, the marginalized sections of the society did not have the legal right for operating Community radio stations. Thus the civil society groups kept on convincing the government to include the voiceless and marginalized sections of our society too from rural, remote and far way situated hilly regions of the country. Finally after a long struggle, in 2006 the government passed a new resolution which allowed Agricultural Universities, Educational Institutions and Civil Society groups such as NGOs to earn licensing in order to run Community radio but within



the 88-108 MHz bandwidth. By the year 2008, more than forty community radio stations started operating either from Education Institutions or NGOs. Sangham Radio was the first NGO run community radio station by Deccan Development Society in Patashpur Village, Medak district, Andhra Pradesh. At present there are more than one hundred and fifty community radio stations operating in India.

### **Government Eligibility Conditions**

The Organization applying for license must be non-profit in nature and must have a minimum proven record of three years of community service. The Community radio must have defined local audience, and the management structure must also reflect the local community they are serving. The programs of these community radio stations must be within the ambit of developmental, educational, social and cultural. Entertainment is not totally banned but News Broadcast is not allowed either in Community Radio or in private FM channels. The regulating organization must be registered under Registration of Societies Act. In the programming part, 50% of the content must be done for the local community and it should be tried to generate the content in local dialect or language. The CRS license given by the Government allows the Organization to run 100 Watt (Effective radiated power) station, with approximate 12 km radius and 30km antennae height.

### **Role in Society**

The most important function that a community radio performs is the developmental work for the local community for whom they are working. The issues are indeed those which are locally concerned for the local people. On issues of Educational development, social and cultural teachings community radio can play a constructive and positive role in the society. Community radio is indeed by the people, for the people and of the people. Since the main purpose of Community radio is to address the issues of geographically remote areas, many backward rural and hilly areas and issues related to them can be covered and addressed which the mainstream media never address at all. One of the important features of this radio is that it generally serves the local people in the local language, thus it can connect with them and help in spreading awareness related to various social issues which can benefit them. Still it can be asserted that a full community radio broadcast process or movement is not in effect as its running is governed and restricted by the Indian Telegraph Act 1885.

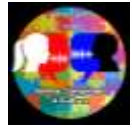


### **Problems of Community Radio**

One of the major asset and running force behind various community radio stations in India are the young aged girls of those communities. But with time, when they get married, these stations face real hardship for their continuation. The main problem for smoothly running the community radio stations is the proper allocation of funds. Since, the aims of these societies are to serve the remote rural villages and remote hilly areas if too much expenditure comes on their shoulder, it surely becomes difficult for them.

### **Literature Review**

The main aim and purpose behind the birth and growth of any medium like the Community radio can be identified when its trajectory is seen in India as also in any other part of the world. The advent and birth of community radio was in Latin America as an alternative to mainstream broadcasting and for the purpose of providing basic education to the marginalized and poor sections of the society (Ronkegilyolo, 1995). In the African nation of South Africa Community radio originated with the revolutionary purpose of democracy and decentralization in the post racial government era (Bohafa, 1998). The international agencies including the United Nations whose purpose was developmental communication helped in the establishment of different Community Radio centers in Asia. According to Surveys (1995) the term community aimed at participation from members of a local area and also two way participatory approaches in communication. MJR David in *Passion for Radio* has mentioned the participatory communication in the Sri Lanka in the Mahaveli Community Radio, where authorities kept communication with sixty thousand families who were settled near the Mahaveli River. In Philippines the birth of Thambuli Community radio was started to involve the communities and people who are very poor and underdeveloped to take part and participate in the National issues and become aware about them. In the year 1997 Radio Sagarmatha South Asia's first independent community radio was established in Nepal under the aegis of press and environment organizations. In 2005 this radio aired an interview of Maoist leader Prachanda by the BBC, due to which the Nepal Army went for crackdown on journalists of this community radio, as they also carried out events related to upholding democracy in the country. The beginning and successful journey of Community Radio in India was a movement and revolution in itself by the civil society groups, academicians, communication researchers and experts which finally led to the formulation and adoption of the Bangalore Declaration. According to Banjade (2006), audience survey among the users of



the Community Radio Mandarpokhra in Nepal the listening behavior varies with the people living in cities to those living in remote rural areas, and also according to the different ethnicity and caste origins. According to Alumuku (2006) Community radio is fast becoming one of the most efficient and effective ways of communication in a localized community. According to Nirmala (2015), community radio plays a very efficient and effective role in empowerment of women in the society. Adebumiti (2016) in his study has ascertained the role of community radio in the national development, public awareness creation, as well as government policy formulation and adoption.

### **Objectives of Research**

1. To find out and analyze the role of community radio in rural community development in India.
2. To find out the role of community radio in participatory two way communication among the local communities of rural and hilly areas.

### **Research Question**

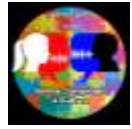
1. What is the role of community radio in bringing social, cultural and educational development in different remote rural and hilly parts in India?
2. Which kind of developmental and socio economic work does a community radio station carry out in India in the rural development?

### **Research Methodology**

This research study has been done to find out different aspects about Community Radio and Rural developmental communication in different parts of the country in India. The research paper followed qualitative research methodology where the researcher analyzed different primary and secondary sources of information available from different books and research papers. The textual analysis followed in this research study took into account the different community radio station working on different rural parts of the country for developmental purpose.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In philosophical background there are two varying and different approaches of community radio. The first model or approach focuses on service towards the local community where the station is working while the other model focuses on participatory approach by the locals in



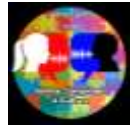
the community radio station itself. In the service model of Community radio focus is given on content related to the local community which the larger and commercial channels are unable to give, that too in their local language and dialect so that they can connect to them. In many cases when content is not available syndicated content is used for the localized audience. On the other hand, in participation model, where two way communication is stressed, focus is given such that the content of the community radio stations are created by the involvement of the members of the local community. The two models are quite different from each other and often their proponents argue in their own directions.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

Community Radio is in itself a revolution the way it has emerged in the Indian media scenario. The way it Community radio has given service to the local communities in rural and remote as well as hilly parts of India is indeed remarkable. Since its inception many outstanding works has been done by community radio station in spreading social awareness, education, and cultural heritage in rural development. The following Community Radio stations indeed did remarkable work for the society.

Sarang 107.8 FM which is a community radio owned by St. Aloysius College (Autonomous) in Mangalore which is coastal city located in the state of Karnataka. The name Sarang itself means representation of different colours as the Community radio indeed voices from different local community members from different religious, linguistic, social and cultural background. This FM includes local community members from agricultural backgrounds, fishermen communities, and run by the locals and the students of the community. Programmes related to health and hygiene, road safety, public awareness, agricultural issues, issues related to the fishermen community is included in this Community Radio. It has contributed a lot to the development of the local community it serves in. Sarang FM broadcasts in different languages like Konkani, Kannada, Tulu, English, Malayalam, and Beary.

Kunjali Panchhi Kutch Ji is another Community Radio station which is working for the women of the area in Kutch in the state of Gujrat. The Community Radio is run by Kutch Women Development Corporation. This CR station involves the women of the area and serving the area since the last twenty years. It focuses on issues related to women education, empowerment, female feticide, dowry and such issues. It has indeed contributed a lot for the cause of women in Kutch.

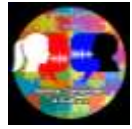


Chala Ho Gaon Mein is a Community radio station in the Palamu district in Jharkhand. It provides a well platform to the rural development of this area as it includes the local people of the area in its programs and discusses various social issues like dowry, domestic violence against women, education, developmental and social awareness issues of the areas. Chala Ho Gaon Mein is indeed a community radio which has worked extensively for the development of the rural area.

Mandakini Ki Awaaz is a village based Community radio station in the Mandakini River Valley at Pauri in Garhwal region of Uttarakhand. It is located in the close proximity from the town of Rudraprayag and maintained by a group from very small Bhanaj Village. The aim of this community radio is to create an open and transparent public information system and create a bridge between government authorities and local bodies like panchayats and the common people that are the villagers. Through this radio the villagers gets an open platform to know about the government policies, public schemes, and any other information through the programs of the station. Ideosync Media Combine and Equal Access are the two NGOs who are working in the field of community radio and development communication since a long time and provided the technical assistance and training required in the establishment of this community radio.

Namma Dhwani (Our Voices) is a Community Radio station in Karnataka which is also India's first cable CR station. It is established and managed by people from the Budikote community and NGOs Myrada and Voices. It also received funding from the UNESCO. According to Singh, Yadav, Dan and Singh (2010) the Namma Dhwani community radio has done a lot in spreading awareness among the people of the Budikote Community and also allowed them to take leadership activities for themselves. Health and hygiene, sanitation, education, food habits, family planning were the different issues covered by this CR station. Now it's a full-fledged multimedia center and self-help group which has audio, video and satellite transmission facilities.

Sangham Radio founded and owned by the Deccan Development Society is another example of a Community Radio which is working tirelessly for the upliftment of development of the rural Dalit community especially the women. It was founded in undivided Andhra Pradesh but now based in Telangana, and covers almost hundred villages and the Dalit women and members of these areas. This CR station helps in different issues related to the social and



economic development of these community members. It was founded in 15<sup>th</sup> October 2008 and now it almost caters to a population of more than fifty thousand.

In Maharashtra the Mann Vikas Samajik Sanstha which is an NGO established the Manneshi Tarang Community Radio for the rural development of womenfolk in 2008. The community radio is owned by the community members of the Mhaswad village community and surrounding areas. According to Ray (2009) Manneshi Tarang helped a lot the women of these village areas in enriching their own talent and helping themselves in different social and cultural issues.

Another milestone in the field of development communication is the Radio Namashkar Community radio in Orissa founded by a group of dedicated youth including National Youth Awardees, Ex-NSS volunteers, Indira Gandhi NSS Awardees whose main aim and dedication is to bring social transformation among the people of the local community and also include them in the development process. The present programs of the Radio Namashkar focus on social issues, youth development, women development, and local governance issues and like. The community members now can speak about their problems through this platform itself.

Anna FM founded in 2004 is the oldest Community Radio in the country founded by the students of Anna University. According to a study by Esthar S. Kar(2010) Anna University played significant role in the social, political, economic transformation of the local community members especially the women of the area as it helped them to become socially aware of the different issues which were brought to them by the Anna FM.

In Purulia district of the state of West Bengal an extraordinary journey is the story of Nityanand Janavani Community Radio Station which is an developmental initiative by MANT( Manbhumi Ananda Ashram Nityanand Trust). The Station is mainly run by locals who generally belong to the Santhal Community in West Bengal. The community radio covers almost two hundred and fifty villages spread across two blocks Pancha and Manbazar 1 in Purulia district. In the last decade and several years this Community Radio station has become one of the most important modes of information providing to the locals of these areas, as very few proper information regarding any update about the world comes to them. The local community members only participate in this radio station and plan and generate its programs on different social issues necessary for development in this region.



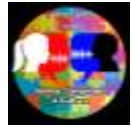


### **Conclusion**

The role played by Community Radio in the development of the rural population is immense in India as well as in different parts of the globe. Community radio provides a platform for the development of the people of the community they are working in. They create a bridge between the government authorities and the rural population and listeners to whom much information reaches through these CR stations. Community Radio indeed plays an important role where the members of the community takes active part in the programs and two way participatory communication takes place. The CR stations create awareness on different social, cultural, development issues to the members of these communities. Women empowerment, education, youth skill development, and many other socio cultural issues are covered by Community Radio. Before its birth and since then the growth and journey of Community Radio in India is indeed a revolution in itself, which no one can argue about. The developmental work that it has been able to create among the locals especially the marginalized, the poor, the women of the society is immense. Maybe in the future much more technological advancement will take place in the field of Community Radio and Development Communication, till then the work it is carrying on is commendable and indeed good for the society.

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