

Community Radio in India: A Model of Participatory Communication in India

Abstract

The Community Radio now-a-days is being identified as the basic need for the indigenous communities residing in the far flung areas, which otherwise could have been inaccessible for the governmental authorities. Since independence, our country has achieved various milestones in the field of communication, but CRS as a milestone for the communication has proved its metal during pandemic times too. Through this research, the researcher has studied the country wide distribution of the Community Radio Stations. The researcher, through analysis of the documents available on the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and other web resources, studied the initiatives of Community Radio Stations which were adopted during the time of Pandemic.

Introduction

The moment, our country got independence from the shackles of slavery, a plan of action was required to be drawn in order to empower the people of India for the

purpose of awareness. The development in a country is counted within various parameters. When our country got independence in 1950s, development was understood as industrialization and urbanization, but by 1970s and 1980s, it included parameters involving the betterment of human lives by working on the schemes which may improve the figures of malnutrition, healthcare of pregnant women and infants and overall changes which may lead to the better living conditions. The governments could also work on the betterment of various societal sections by adopting the measures to reduce poverty and land related issues along with providing minimum basic needs etc.(Narula, 1994) In such a scenario, it was mandatory to ensure the participation from all the communities irrespective of their demographic variations. Although Television had entered India on September 15, 1959 radio was able to feel the nerves of the people around India.

The Independence Day speech and the coverage of World War II had been the best examples to prove this point. The point here to be stressed is the participatory nature of community radio. The historical context in this regards points towards the activeness of governments to promote this tool of participatory communication. The Supreme Court Judgment in 1995 about the Airwaves being a Public property and efforts by NGO Voices did a commendable work of igniting the spark that led to lighting the minds of bigger strata of population.

The studies conducted on the impact of community radio (Timalsina and Pardhan, 2019) on rural populations emphasize on the points like the situational similarity, changes in agricultural practices, emergence of a democratic platform to raise the voices of the masses and a discussion forum on Local Issues, Contribution and Good Governance. In its blog titled 'Community Radio — Aiding India's Rural Development' dated 1 Nov 2019, the Confederation

of Indian Industries (CII) says, "Community radios help connect the disenfranchised, airing their challenges and concerns. Often, we tend to view rural development merely from the prism of economic growth. It should rightfully also include social, spiritual and moral enhancement too. Its role includes poverty eradication, illiteracy eradication and employment. Community radio is the common link which binds all these development factors over a common communication channel."

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting report based on yearly data of 2020 and released in 2021 quotes, "Community Radio is an important third tier in Radio Broadcasting, distinct from Public Service Radio broadcasting and Commercial Radio. Community Radio Stations (CRSs) are low power Radio Stations, which are meant to be set-up and operated by local communities. The policy guidelines for Community Radio were last amended in 2018."

In an article titled 'Community radio gives boost to rural development', The Hindu quoted an authority involved in the studies concerning impact of radio on masses mentions, "The Central Government has initiated a convergence between Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Self Help Groups (SHGs) to facilitate rural transformation and adding community radio stations may have far-reaching benefits as

radio is now accessed over mobile phones as well. Community radios speak the dialect, language, and voice of the people in their own style. People can look forward to participating in the programmes as, speaking on radio, makes the local villager a celebrity in the area."

Community Radio Stations are always credited with benefitting the indigenous communities. Dahal & Aram (2013) in their study on indigenous people mentioned "Indigenous communities can reflect their agenda of identity re-establishment towards empowerment through the active participation in the production of media contents. Active participation of indigenous communities in local radio production not only mandates acknowledgement of ethnic identity in the new nation building but also give an opportunity of lesson learning on the potentiality of using community radios as one of the tools for empowerment. In this context, reestablishment of identity through community radio deserves appreciation because it facilitates the creation of discursive space which will ultimately help to establish pluralist democracy by creating different public spheres."

Johnson & Rajadurai (2020) in their research highlighted the impact of community radio broadcasting on a community inclusive of farmers, students, workers and homemakers residing near a community radio

station and studied and found that this governmental initiative was successful in improved income and agricultural yield for farmers, health and wellbeing of the community as a whole and growth as well as development of kids. The interviews conducted with the people reflected the success of this initiative as it offered solution to their general problems in farming like insect/rat issues, reduced transplantation duration, reduction in the use of human resources during cultivation, additional income from sale of straw; problems related to health and wellbeing like improvement in knee pain, less cases of anaemia, stomach pain, learning of new healthy dishes through a cooking show, addressing kids problems through free doctor consultation etc.

Rationale for Study

For the purpose of conducting this research, the researcher had explored the research conducted by various research scholars. Most of the research has been centred at assessing the impact of community radio stations on the users. The women entrepreneurs, children, marginal sections of society, farming community etc, but the spread of these community radio stations is another area of concern, which has been explored keenly through this research paper.

Objectives

- To map out the growth of Community Radio in

India.

- To study the distribution of the state-wise growth of Community Radio Stations in India.
- To analyse the division of Public and Private Community Radio Stations in India.

Hypothesis

- The third tier of radio has seen tremendous growth since its inception.
- The community radio has reached every region of India.
- As community radio coincides with the aim to ensure participatory communication, most of the community radio stations have been allotted to public entities.

Research Methodology

Kothari (2004) in his book Research methodology explains the concept as a systematic way to find out the solution for the research problem. It spreads the understanding of such a phenomenon by conducting the research in a scientific way. It highlights the sequence of steps to be adopted for finding a solution that best resolves the problem. In the present research, researcher is aimed at exploring the growth trends of Community Radio Stations. To examine the same, content analysis has been carried out with content obtained from official website of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Annual Report of the same ministry. Content signifies the inner soul of any concept and an in depth study of such a concept by dividing the

content into pre defined research categories denotes the process of content analysis. (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1976). Along with that, the research studies from various researchers in the subject of Community Radio have been studied extensively and important observations have been marked and mentioned. The already conducted research has been unable to map the country wise growth of Community Radio Stations, their region wise division and classification on the basis of private and public ownership.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Around the country, MIB- (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting) has given licence to 339 community radio stations till date (Jan 31, 2022). The classification and analysis made out from the details of all those radio stations have been studied minutely to carry out the analysis based on the various kinds of distributions as mentioned in the data analysis and interpretation mentioned below:

State-wise Distribution

S.No.	Number	States
1	0	Meghalaya, Goa, Mizoram
2	1	Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Nagaland and Tripura
3	3-5	Manipur, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Jammu and Kashmir
4	6-10	Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Bihar, West Bengal
5	11-20	Rajasthan, Gujarat, Telangana, Kerala, Rajasthan
6	20 Above	Tamilnadu, UP, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Odisha and Haryana

Table 1: State wise distribution of Community Radio Stations

Analysis

- The states with minimum number of Community Radio Stations are Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Tripura with just one radio station working in the state for the welfare of the people. Manipur, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Jammu and Kashmir, on the other hand, are the states having 3-5 units approved for the state.
- Talking about the numbers from 6-10, there are five states, Delhi with 6 and Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal with 7 Community Radio Stations and Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Bihar having 8, 9 and 10 Community Radio Stations respectively.
- Rajasthan, Gujarat and Telangana contribute equally for raising the voices of diverse communities of their areas with 11 Community Radio Stations.
- Having an edge upon above mentioned states, Kerala with 14 and Rajasthan with 18 and community radio stations make the area wise communities

to contribute in a better way for participatory communication.

- The major share of the community radio i.e. 194 lies with only six states. Among those six states, Tamilnadu tops the list with 39 and UP with 38. Maharashtra is on third place with 33, Karnataka with 23 at fourth place and Odisha and Haryana are on fifth place with 20.
- Only Union Territories of Delhi, Chandigarh, J&K & Puducherry have presence of Community Radio Stations, other UTs like Andaman and Nicobar, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep, Ladakh are still to explore the presence of such an important facility.

Region-wise Distribution

Region	Sum of Qty
East	60(18%)
North	112(33%)
South	97(29%)
West	70(20%)
Grand Total	339

Table 2: Zonal distribution of Community Radio Stations

- The Northern region tops other regions with maximum number of community radio stations. It contributes 33% of the share of the total community radio stations across the nation.
- The Southern region is not much behind the other regions by a sizeable number. It has 97 CRS to its credit, which constitutes 29% of the total number of CRS.
- The Western and Eastern

regions are much behind with just 20% and 18% share of CRS respectively.

Private- Public Distribution

Region	Public	Private
East	13	47
West	17	53
North	23	89
South	12	85
Total	65	274

Table 3: Ownership distribution of Community Radio Stations

- The larger chunk of the CRS across India is private in nature. As it is clear from pie chart, 81% of the community radio stations are lying in private hands, which may work according to the guidelines issued by Information and Broadcasting industry, but still may be driven for personal benefits.
- The region wise distribution shows that largest number of private CRS have been established in Northern and Southern regions of India as compared to the Eastern and Western Regions.
- In spite of having the less number of CRS in East, the public community radio stations are more in number as compared to Southern Region.

Governmental Initiatives to promote good programming on CRS

Every year, MIB i.e. Ministry of Information and

Broadcasting announces National Community Radio Awards under various categories. This event was started in year 2011-12 and so far, this award function is being celebrated every year. The recent awards under this initiatives were announced in 2021 for the preceding years and it was the eight time since such an announcement was made. The awardees were finalized and rewarded in following four categories:

- i) **Thematic Award:** This award recognises the audio presentations having thematic focus as per the needs of the community. This section demands consistency of a program for 13 episodes for a particular theme based program. The source of revenue for such a program can be sponsorship or an initiative solely based upon the innovativeness of the CRS staff members. The real focus should be providing a solution to the needs of the community members. There is no restriction on the consideration of a particular sector of the society, be it social, cultural, existing, historical, financial etc.
- ii) **Most Innovative Community Engagement Award:** The main goal of community radio is to assist the

community's cause by including community members in the broadcast of their programmes. Traditional communication styles can be included in new programme formats to transmit development problems to the community, which can have a stronger impact. The programme should be fresh, unique, and forward-thinking. It should include a component of community participation and relevance. Entries for this prize must demonstrate community involvement in the program's planning, content, production, and broadcast. The process of bringing the community together for a larger involvement should be reflected in the submission. This involvement process should have put the community at the centre. The programme should have aided in bringing about a collective change. If the programmes are intended to bring any change at the community level, then the community radio station staff should submit all the proofs related to the changes bought about in the audiences.

iii) **Promoting Local Culture Award**

Award : Local talent and tradition must be incorporated into the entries. Entries can be written in any language, but they must

include a description of the efforts done to promote local culture as well as a brief synopsis in English or Hindi. The program's endeavour to improve local well-being should be reflected in the entry in this category. The initiative should have given the community a sense of belonging. It could have influenced the local community's confidence because of common knowledge, local traditions, and values. The program's efforts should have fostered cultural preservation and promotion. It could have, for example, restored a fading art, protected a local landmark, aided in the preservation of historic houses and Havelis, or made use of local culture. The subject of the program could be a local dish, local music or folklore, festivity or anything that can be connected to a culture on a close basis.

iv) **Sustainability Model Award**

Award: The goal of this prize is to encourage CRS to embrace innovative revenue-generating techniques in order to self-sustain. Sustainability refers to the station's ability to continue in four areas: a. content, b. human resources, c. technical, and d. finance. This category does not require audio samples, but documentary

proofs such as the organization's audited balance sheets/CRS will be required.

CRS Initiatives during Pandemic

- During COVID 19 emergency, CRS kept on educating the people with their programming focused on COVID related awareness, Child education, engaging

programming for common people and messages from the prominent personalities so as to motivate the people to stay at home during lockdown.

- The initiatives of the frontline workers like doctors, volunteers and security personnel.

- The role and location of the community kitchens was highlighted for the benefit of the uninformed strata of society.

- Expert advice related to health and education was broadcasted for welfare of the people.

- The Government organises events on achievements of Community Radio and such a series from the month of April to June in the year 2020 was initiated by Government with the name "Corona CR Diary", which was played by

dividing the country into North-Eastern, Southern, Northern and Western Zones. The focus of such an initiative was to work on grass root levels with the help of community radio stations and creating the content to inspire the people in the tough times of pandemic.

- COVID-safe behaviour by promoting the safety measures such as social distancing, hand washing, optimum usage of masks etc. were highlighted in the country with the help of 190 Community Radio Stations.

Conclusion

The community radio stations in India have been successful in contributing towards the concept of 'Communication for Development' by assuring participatory communication from those people, who otherwise would have remained unaware of the governmental policies.

The concept of 'by the people and for the people' has played a significant role by changing the lives of the people, who in any way contribute towards the programming and production of community

radio stations situated in any area. The allotment of the community radio stations among agricultural centres, educational institutions and NGOs have proved beneficial for the communities residing in the selected areas. The distribution of 339 CRS allocated till date have been studied and it has been found that there are still some areas like Meghalaya, Goa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Andaman and Nicobar, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep and Ladakh are still not able to get benefit from this communication facility.

Further, a huge chunk i.e. 81% of the community radio stations lies in the hands of private organisations, as compared to 19 percent public CRS. Among all those CRS, the significant thrust is on promoting the Indian culture, awareness and education of community along with the innovativeness. This is clear from the list of awardees and the programs for which, the awards have been announced during last eight editions of National Community Radio Awards. Consider for instance the latest list of awardees, the programs like Ritubedhum, Shikshan

Sarvasathi, Super Brain of the Week, Jan Sunvayi, Genius of Vidisha, Dastak kavya Goshthi, Kakalichhanda, Gur Mahotsav, Art Manthan etc and involvement of organisations like Wayanad Social Service Society, Vishwas Dhyam Prabodhini & Research Institute, Kisan Seva Sansthan, Ayodhya Lal Kalyan Niketan, Samgra Shikshan Evam Jan Kalyan Santhan, Shri Krishna Shikshan Lok Parmarth Samiti, INSPIRE, SD College of Pharmacy & Vocational Studies, Institute of Management Studies, NOIDA, S.M. Sehgal Foundation etc. So all in all, this platform of Community Radio Station has been a greatest achievement of Government after independence.



Behind the Research

Dr. Vijayta Taneja

Associate Professor, Noida
Email: vijayta_taneja@yahoo.com

Bio

Dr Vijayta Taneja is an Associate Professor with DIHE -JIMS NOIDA and has been teaching Media students over the last 15 years. She has contributed to a book namely ' International News Coverage in Indian English Newspapers' as an author and 'Abhivyakti' as an Editor in 2021. Dr Vijayta Taneja is a Media Literacy Certified Factshala trainer since 2020. She has been creating videos for Media Literacy in the Punjabi language and has a YouTube channel called the 'Media Dictionary'. She has published 16 research papers in Journals and Proceedings.

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