

**'GROWTH OF FM' CHANGING FACE OF COMMUNITY  
RADIO: THE NEW VOX POPULI OF INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*FM Radio is a device that can influence to its listeners in worldwide areas. It has capacity to increase one's knowledge, ideas, and understanding on any issue while maintaining personal relationship with its transmission. Its listeners interact with their environmental subjects by a medium. It can also be noteworthy, such as bringing change into a person's attitudes, culture and can cause for social change.*

*Community radio as a medium that gives voice to the voiceless people in the present scenario. It is serves as mouthpiece of marginalized and is at the art of Communication revolution process in our society. With community, radio people from rural areas have the means to make their views on decisions that concern them.*

*The notions of Transparency and good Governance take on new dimensions and democracy is reinforced. 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 stations may carry news and information programming geared toward the local area, particularly immigrant or minority groups that are poorly served by other major media outlets. More specialized musical shows are also often a feature of many community radio stations. Community stations can be valuable assets for a region. Community radio stations typically avoid content found on commercial outlets, such as Top 40 music, sports, and celebrity chitchat.*

*The pioneering experience from which today's community radio has evolved began some 50 years ago in Latin America. There are more than 30,000 thousand community radio stations in the world. In India, broadcasting began in July 1923 with programmes by the Radio Club of Bombay and other radio clubs. It started with two-tier system of broadcasting, namely national and regional. However today they are four tiers of broadcasting with the addition of local radio station and community radio station.*

*Nowadays community radio is the most affordable and prime electronic medium for voiceless people in the world. The last two decades have seen a rapid expansion in the numbering and popularity of community radio station come up in the world. Here my objective and aim is to find how community radio is an effective tool in the society.*

**KEYWORDS**

**Community Radio, Communication, Community, Development etc.**

**INTRODUCTION**

Over 75% of people live in rural areas of developing countries. In most agricultural communities live in rural areas. In these rural areas, one finds that there is a direct relationship between agricultural and rural development. This comes about by the fact that most people in rural areas depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

Because such a large population lives in rural areas, they are often the birthplace of trends and events, which will have a major impact on cities later on. For example, food is grown there to feed the whole nation and droughts, diseases and infestations to crops are first felt there. Even research meant for better farming practices is tested there. Therefore, there is need to keep the communities informed of what is happening in and around them in order for them to adapt to varying situations.

In this breath, Community radio has vital role in spreading knowledge in traditional societies, where crossing education was just a dream. By regularly broadcasting programs on agriculture issues, health problems and on various social, cultural and moral evils.

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### **CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY RADIO**

The prime role of community radio is giving a voice to people who do not have access to mainstream media to express their views on community development. Promoting the right to communicate, expediting the process of informing the community. It also upholds creative growth and democratic spirit at the community level.

### **OWNER OF COMMUNITY RADIO**

Community radio stations are operated, owned, and influenced by the communities. They are generally nonprofit and provide a mechanism for enabling individuals, groups, and communities to tell their own stories, to share experiences and in a media-rich world, to become creators and contributors of media. It is completely free from the clutches of the market; profit motive in its functioning does not hold water.

In many parts of the world, community radio acts as a vehicle for the community and voluntary sector, civil society, agencies, NGOs and citizens to work in partnership to further community development aims, in addition to broadcasting.

“A community radio station is one that is operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community. The community can be territorial or geographical – a township, village, district or island. It can also be a group of people with common interests, who are not necessarily living in one defined territory. Consequently, community radio can be managed or controlled by one group, by combined groups, or by people such as women, children, farmers, fisher folk, ethnic groups, or senior citizens.” - Louie Tabang, 2002 (Tabang is a pioneer in the concept and practice of community radio).

### **COMMUNITY RADIO IN WORLD**

The pioneering experience from which today's community radio has evolved began some 50 years ago in Latin America. Following this other part of world like Bolivia, Colombia, South Africa, Kenya, Nepal etc., backward place people have heard the voice community radio. The last three decade have seen a rapid expansion in the number of Community radio stations in the world. Now at present, there are more than 30,000 thousand-community radios stations are air their programmes across the world and involving millions of local people every day.

### **COMMUNITY RADIO IN INDIA**

In India, the community radio began in the mid-1990s, soon after the Supreme Court of India ruled in its judgment of February 1995 that "air waves are public property". This inspired groups across the country; however, only educational radio stations were originally permitted under a number of conditions.

Anna FM was India's first campus "community" radio station Launched on 1 February 2004, it is run by the Education and Multimedia Research Centre (EMMRC); almost all programmes are produced by Media students of Anna University. On 16 November 2006, the government of India implemented new Community Radio Guidelines, which permit to NGOs and other organizations/trust to own and operate community radio stations.

By end of April 2012, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had received a total of 1150 community radio license applications. Out of these, Grant of Permission Agreements (GOPA) had been signed only 161 applicants. Now 126 community radio stations were on air.

In fact, going by the official ministry data, out of these operational radio stations, 81 belong to the educational sector, six to state agricultural universities, four to Krishi Vigyan Kendra's and 41 run by the NGOs.

From April 1, 2012, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has hiked the annual spectrum fees Rs. 19,700 to Rs. 91,000. This will set back for newly coming community radios. Against the government decision widespread protest from functional community radio stations, support bodies like Community Radio Forum.

For this crucial financial crisis and conditional rules and regulation by the government, still now Community radio moments successfully take place in India.

### **IN KARNATAKA**

After almost a decade-long campaigning for a 'three-tier radio broadcasting system' in Karnataka by some media activists. Community radio marked its presence in 2006, after getting a nod from the Central Government.



At present 12 Community, radios are operating in Karnataka. Radio Siddhartha 90.8 CRS is one among them.

Siddhartha Radio radiating on the frequency 90.8 FM began its operation on May 6, 2010. This is also a campus radio located in Tumkur. It is successfully functioning under the Sri Siddhartha Center for Media Studies Tumkur. It is reach to 25-30 Km radius surrounding area of Tumkur district.

### **OBJECTIVES OF PAPER**

The specific objective of the study was to study as to how many listen Radio Siddhartha.

To study at what time people listened to radio and what kind of programmes they liked.

To study the favourite programmes of Radio Siddhartha and to know what kind of programmes that listeners like on the community radio station.

### **PARTICIPANTS**

50 per cent audiences live in Tumkur City and surrounding 24 rural areas.

### **TRANSMISSION TIME AND DURATION**

Morning 6 am - 9 am, Afternoon 12 - 2 pm and evening 6 pm – 9 pm.

Total broadcast of 9 hours in a day.

### **PROGRAMMES**

The main thrust areas of 90.8 FM Radio Siddhartha is to broadcast rural centric community based programmes such as:

Health, hygiene, anti-smoking, aids, gender sensitization, environment and other issues related to local communities.

Phone-in Programmes with the experts on Health, Education, stress management, Environment, interpersonal relationship between parent and children, examination stress etc.

Spreading awareness among the students about various careers, career counseling and broadcasting other socially relevant programmes.

Broadcasting the programmes of campus and colleges such as seminars, workshops, lectures, discussions, debates, cultural functions etc., for the student communities.

Broadcasting different community based programmes with the help of community members residing in Tumkur and surrounding areas.

### **ANALYSIS OF SURVEY**

We undertook a study to see how the popularity and effectiveness of such radio stations could be improved. We took suggestions from listeners about ways to improve content, took inputs from them about presentation of these programmes and explored ideas for popularizing the service. The study covered Radio Siddhartha – A community radio station of Tumkur. Only those who were regular listeners of the selected.

Community radio station programmes were selected as respondents, and were personally interviewed by the researchers. Regarding content, the respondents suggested increasing the number of quiz-based programmes on various issues and topics with attractive incentive to listeners, including discussion programmes based on local problems and issues with suggested remedies, broadcasting local and community level news. Starting phone-in programmes to give listeners a chance to express themselves on particular issue or problems, and air a song of their choice as well.

Organizing and broadcasting live competitive programmes held in the name of local personalities in various fields. Also including programmes based on Indian classical music, ragas, film songs and bhajans were among the other suggestions received.

Regarding presentation, the listeners suggested that interesting information could be provided on singers, lyricists, others while the songs associated with them were being played. Keeping in view the local taste, the formats followed by All India Radio, and Commercial FM Radio could be tweaked to suit community radio programmes the respondents suggested. They also wanted local issues and culture to be given emphasis, opportunities provided to local people to express themselves on local and current affairs, and intensive and complete information provided on various issues before these were discussed with experts on the radio programmes.



The respondents of the survey also suggested various ways in which community radio programmes could be popularized. These included telecasting programmes at set times and days specifically for people from backward class colonies, to suit their niche interests and tastes, and customizing programmes for target groups like senior citizens, young people, children, students, working women and housewives.

The respondents also suggested utilizing other popular mass communication media of the area might to boost community radio listenership. Door-to-door visits by volunteers to encourage participation in community radio station programmes were another suggestion.

The results of the survey demonstrated that there is scope to improve the content and presentation of community radio programmes. If programmes are designed according to the suggestions received, listeners will benefit and be encouraged to join the radio service's programmes and activities, thus making the initiative more popular as well as more useful to the community.

In India, where literacy remains a substantial barrier to development, radio especially community radio, can reach a large number of poor people because it is affordable and uses little electricity which is low supply in many countries and barely affordable for many poor. In 2000, AIR programmes could be heard in two-third of all Indian households in 24 languages and 146 dialects, over some 120 million-radio sets. Community Radio gives a voice to the community they serve with programmes in local languages, respecting local culture, traditions and interests. In addition, it facilitates dialogue within the community; while on a national level it encourages diversity, creativity and citizens' participation in democratic processes. Community Radio provides a counterbalance to the increasing globalization and commercialization of media. Most TV and radio stations, including public stations, are concentrated in urban areas.

In the more remote, rural areas, Community Radio stations are often the only media available, where they are listened to by large parts of the population. Community Radio stations fill the gap left by national and commercial media, and reach local audiences the national media ignore. They fulfill the role of public broadcaster, informing the public at a local level, and representing their views. In this way, they give a voice to the voiceless, enabling people to speak and make their opinions, grievances and ideas known to those who have the power to make decisions.

#### ***Community Radio for Agricultural Development***

Agriculture has always been a highly knowledge-intensive sector requiring continuous information flow. Farmers' quest for authentic, credible and usable information from both established systems and traditional practices is ever increasing in this fluctuating global environment, to operate efficiently and compete economically. The rapid changes happening around with WTO/globalization, uncontrolled urbanization, uncertainty in climate change, discerning consumer segment and continued farm crisis emphasize the importance of timely, appropriate and need based information and knowledge to meet myriad developmental challenges.

Agricultural extension is the vehicle or system for delivering useful information to farmers and assisting those farmers to develop requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to make use of this information or technology effectively. In recent times, advances in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are revolutionizing agriculture extension by offering various technological options such as television, internet, mobile, telephony etc.

There is an interesting combination of approaches in the use of rural radio for agriculture extension. They are locally focused, using indigenous knowledge to build on local cultural and agro-ecological diversity, blending with technology and scientific innovation. In addition, a two-way communication of sharing farmers experience can be an interesting adaptation. Historically agriculture extension has often failed to communicate technical information to farmers in a way that has enabled it to be adopted locally. Thus, the combinations of approaches strike an effective balance between indigenous and scientific approaches to agricultural development.

However, using radio for agriculture extension is just one dimension, as rural radio can serve multiple roles of extending socio-economic development in rural areas such as health, nutrition, sanitation etc.

#### ***CONCLUSION***

Even though there is a strong future for community radio. According to my opinion, the need of the hour is to liberalize the policy guidelines, which will encourage interested parties to set up more CRS.

CRS can help to empower and give a voice to the people of rural India. The success of CRS depends on the participation of the locales in the production process.



This is the platform for the voiceless people to raise their voices through various programs. Therefore, I conclude that CRS is the most effective tool for development and has created a communication explosion at the grass root level.

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**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SURVEY**

To what degree respondents are exposed to the media - folk media, newspapers, movies, television, radio, any other please mention.

Are you aware of the "community radio" in your village? If yes, how did you come to know of it?

Do you listen to the programme of this radio? If yes, Where? - In homes, public spaces, groups or alone?

Is there any control of public listening contexts by people in leadership roles? Any formal/informal discussions following broadcast.

Are there any technical problems in reception of the programme?

Do you find the scheduling of the broadcast/narrowcast appropriate?

What about the language and format of the programme?

How frequently do you listen to community radio programmes?

Have you participated in any programme?

What issues are talked about in these programmes and how are they different from those in mainstream media? Are grassroots issues and indigenous ideas transformed into radio programmes? Are there avenues to give feedback?

Are you benefited through these - information, education, entertainment, etc.?

What kind of feelings does the programme generate?

Would you like to be on the programme? Have you visited the facilities any time?

Any problems encountered at the facility centre.

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