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## **COMMUNITY RADIO IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*India became independent on 15 August 1947. Though, after Independence we achieved tremendous success in many fields but still much is needed to be done in order to become a developed nation. Statistics betrays that after Independence our growth rate has increased from 3% to 9% .But, still we are facing problems like poverty, illiteracy, unemployment etc. Besides; a major chunk of population living in villages (72%) is still backward. Though the government is spending million of rupees in the name of rural development, but still it's not getting the desired results. Among many reasons, one of the foremost reason is the communication gap between government devised policies and common masses as people largely remain ignorant regarding them. In order to bridge this gap, a firm communication policy will prove crucial. According to this policy, local community media should be promoted in order to enhance community development, at least at grass root level. Among various existing genres of local community media, **Community Radio** will prove most effective as it can easily cover a wider range of area as well as diversified audience. Besides, experiments with community radio in many parts of India have proved it to be the cheapest and the strongest medium for fulfilling communication gap between the community and the Govt. It has proved to be a vital tool in strengthening the 'Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression' As, the community radio is still evolving it might be possible that in the near future, we will witness its various new forms which will be more superior as well as user friendly. Well whatever the case may be, community radio has proved to be one of the best medium of communication at the grass-root level.*

**KEY WORDS:** Rural development, poverty, community radio, frequency, diversified audience, communication gap

### **INTRODUCTION**

From the macro point of view, development refers to the change from simple forms of organization and production to complex modern ones. Originally men and women lived in

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small, self-sufficient communities, dependent on things they found in their environment. If food, fuel, or materials ran out, they would simply move on. One of the first significant social and technological developments was the transition from this nomadic way of life to agricultural cultivation in settled communities, from which began societies as we know them today. So, this phenomenon will be termed as development, though in the materialistic sense. Development, as far as concerned is a wholesome process. Development doesn't matter only the economic growth but also the social, spiritual and moral enhancement of the entire society or nation.

Economists defined development as the growth in terms of structural and technological advancement. Typically, in the early stages of development economies have most of their production and labor force in agriculture. Later, the manufacturing and service sectors become larger. The service sector includes government, defense, construction, transport, finance, insurance, banking, and the like, as well as the work of people who do not produce physical objects such as cars or radios. Thus, accountants, lawyers, teachers, and hair dressers are considered part of the service sector.

Another key feature of development is to eradicate poverty. Entire economies can be poor, or they can grow but still leave large sections of their people in poverty. In the second half of the 20th century, development policy makers became acutely aware of the difficulties a large number of countries in the developing world facing as most of them were former colonies of the industrialized nations. Development economics became more or less synonymous with the study of how these countries could progress out of poverty.

Now-a-days no one can deny the importance of media in fighting social evils, illiteracy as well as poverty. Understanding the essence of media and showing full confidence in it, our beloved Prime Minister of India Pt. Nehru take all possible measures to make Press free from any authoritarian control. Remembering Nehru's contribution to Indian media M.Chalapathi Rau once said "In the period after independence, Nehru played a large part in shaping or thinking about the press, as Gandhi Ji has done before Independence. He was opposed by a powerful section of the Indian Press, but he stood for tolerance and accepted that a vigorous,

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critical press is a vital part of democracy. “Media has played pivotal role in spreading knowledge in traditional societies where accessing education was just a dream. By regularly broadcasting programs on agricultural issues and on various social and moral evils, media has contributed a lot in bringing multifarious development in this nation.

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### **DEVELOPMENT IN INDIAN CONTEXT**

India became independent on 15 August 1947. Before this, we were merely a colony of British who exploited our country in the best possible manner. Though after Independence we achieved tremendous success in many fields but still much is needed to be done in order to become a developed nation. Statistics betrays that after Independence our growth rate has increased from 3% to 9 %.( 1). But, still we are facing problems like poverty, illiteracy, unemployment etc. That’s because our population has multiplied at an alarming level though the available resources more or less remain the same. Besides economic development it’s very necessary to facilitate social, ethical as well community based development in order to avoid chaos in the near future. Though our Government is taking various steps to facilitate the developmental process, but we can’t accomplish anything till the condition of a major chunk of population which resides in villages has not been improved. As, 72% of our population still dwell in villages, so how could we think of becoming a super power without empowering the rural area of our nation. Thus understanding the importance of rural uplifting, our Government has increased the annual rural development budget from Rupees 13,670 crore (2002-03) to 18,353 crore (2005-06). Besides it, the central as well as state government has devised various developmental schemes in order to improve the conditions of rural areas.

### **CHALLENGES**

Though the government is spending million of rupees in the name of rural development, but still it’s not getting the desired results. There can be many reasons behind this. But the first and the foremost reason is the communication gap between government devised policies and common masses. Though, the policies are extremely good, but common masses remain ignorant regarding them because of lack of information, illiteracy, proper guidance and lack

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of training in this field. Thus, hardly these policies remain relevant in the layman's context and due to this a very small section of citizens is benefited by them.

In order to bridge this gap, a firm communication policy will prove crucial. According to this policy, local community media should be promoted in order to enhance community development, at least at grass root level. Among various existing genres of local community media, **Community Radio** will prove most effective as it can easily cover a wider range of area as well as audience. Besides it, Government should also take firm step to check prevailing corruption in Government offices as well as various public sectors.

### **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. The term has somewhat different meanings in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia. In the UK, the idea of community-based services can be traced back at least as far as the original concept for BBC local radio in the early 1960s. Thereafter various land-based unlicensed pirate radio stations (Such as East London Radio, and Radio AMY (Alternative Media for You)) developed the idea further. As pirate stations proliferated during the late 1970s and early 1980s these stations were joined by those broadcasting specifically to minority immigrant communities (Afro-Caribbean and Asian etc.), particularly in cities such as London, Birmingham, Bristol, and Manchester. Although, "community radio" remains synonymous with "pirate radio" for some people in the UK, most minority immigrant stations focused purely on specific musical genres and were operated (theoretically at least) on a for-profit basis. Community radio services in the UK are operated on a not for-profit basis with community ownership and control built in to their structures.

Following an experiment started in 2001 by the former UK broadcast regulator The Radio Authority, since 2005 some 200 such stations have been licensed by the UK broadcasting regulator (Ofcom). Most such stations broadcast on FM (typically at a radiated power level of

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approximately 25 Watts (per-plane)) although there are a few that operate on AM (medium wave), particularly in more rural areas.

In the U.S., community radio stations are non-profit, community-based operations licensed by the Federal Communications Commission for broadcasting in the noncommercial, public portion of the FM band. These stations differ from other public radio outlets in the U.S. by allowing community volunteers to actively participate as broadcasters.(2)Pirate radio is virtually unknown in Australia because of the strictly controlled allocation of broadcasting frequencies, and the likely application of severe, legislated penalties, including jail, for offenders.

### **CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY**

Communities are complex entities and so what constitutes "community" in Community radio is often a contentious and tricky debate and will vary from country to country. Community may also often be replaced by a range of terms like "alternative", "radical" or "citizen" radio.

Traditionally in sociology, a "community" has been defined as a group of interacting people living in a common location. Community radio is often built around concepts of access and participation and so the term community may be thought of as often referring to geographical communities based around the possible reach of the radio's signal, ie. the people who can receive the message, and their potential to participate in the creation of such messages. This is of course problematized by the fact that many radio stations now broadcast over the internet as well, thereby reaching potentially global audiences and communities.

### **COMMUNITY RADIO AND ITS VARIOUS MODELS**

Philosophically two distinct approaches to community radio can be discerned, though the models are not necessarily mutually exclusive. 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.

Within the service model localism is often prized, as community radio, as a third tier, can provide content focused on a more local or particular community than larger operations. Sometimes, though, the provision of syndicated content that is not already available within

the station's service area, is seen as a desirable form of service. Within the United States, for example, many stations syndicate content from groups such as Pacifica Radio, such as Democracy Now!, on the basis that it provides a form of content not otherwise available, because of such a program's lack of appeal to advertisers or (especially in Pacifica's case) politically controversial nature.

Within the access or participatory model, the participation of community members in producing content is seen as a good in itself. While this model does not necessarily exclude a service approach, there is a tension between the two, as outlined, for example, in Jon Bekken's Community Radio at the Crossroads

### **VISION, PHILOSOPHY AND STATUS**

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, 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 and pirate stations (where they are tolerated) can be valuable assets for a region. Community radio stations typically avoid content found on commercial outlets, such as Top 40 music, sports, and "drive-time" personalities.

### **COMMUNITY RADIO IN INDIA**

In India, the campaign to legitimise 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".<sup>(3)</sup>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. Anna FM is India's first campus 'community' radio, launched on 1 February 2004, which is run by Education and Multimedia Research Centre (EM<sup>2</sup>RC), and all programmes are produced by the students of Media Sciences at Anna University

On 16 November 2006, the government of India notified new Community Radio Guidelines which permit NGOs and other civil society organizations to own and operate community radio stations. About 4,000 community radio licenses are on offer across India, according to



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government sources. By 30 November 2008, the ministry of Information & broadcasting, government of India, had received 297 applications for community radio licenses, including 141 from NGOs and other civil society organizations, 105 from educational institutions and 51 for 'farm radio' stations to be run by agricultural universities and agricultural extension centers ('Krishi Vigyan Kendras').

Of these, 107 community radio stations have been cleared for licensing through the issue of Letters of Intent. 13 Grant of Permission Agreements (GOPA) have been signed with license applicants under the new scheme. By 30 November 2008, there were 38 operational community radio stations in the country. Of these, two are run by NGOs and the rest by educational institutions. The first community-based radio station, licensed to an NGO (as distinct from campus-based radio) was launched on 15 October 2008, when 'Sangham Radio' in Pastapur village, Medak district, Andhra Pradesh state, was switched on at 11.00am. Sangham Radio, which broadcasts on 90.4 MHz, is licensed to Deccan Development Society (DDS), an NGO that works with women's groups in about 75 villages of Andhra Pradesh. The community radio station is managed by 'General' Narsamma and Algole Narsamma. The second NGO-led community radio station in India was launched on 23 October 2008 at 'TARAGram' in Orchha, Madhya Pradesh state. Named 'Radio Bundelkhand' after the Bundelkhand region of central India where it is located, the radio station is licensed to the Society for Development Alternatives (DA), a Delhi-based NGO. Radio Bundelkhand also broadcasts on 90.4 MHz for four hours a day, including two hours of repeat broadcast. By 9 July 2009, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting had issued 'Grant of Permission Agreements' (GOPA) for 51 community radio stations. Most of the GOPAs were issued to educational institutions. Among the community radio stations started in 2009 SARANG 107.8 is the only one in Karnataka, though there are few more which has received SACFA (Standing Committee Clearance for Frequency Allocation).

Under the new community radio policy, any not-for-profit 'legal entity' – except individuals, political parties and their affiliates, criminal and banned organizations – can apply for a CR 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 Pradesh and Raghav FM in Bihar) ran successfully 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 area of approximately 12 kilometres 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.

However, the government recently clarified that certain categories of news are permitted on radio, including sports news and commentaries, information on traffic and weather conditions, coverage of cultural events and festivals, information on academic events, public announcements pertaining to utilities like electricity and water supply, disaster warnings and health alerts.

Five minutes of advertising per hour is allowed on community radio. Sponsored programs are not allowed except when the program is sponsored by the Government at the Centre or State. Activists and community workers from across the country have banded together under the aegis of the 'Community Radio Forum' in order to coordinate training and support for community radio stations, as well as to continue to petition for a more proactive community radio policy. The Community Radio Forum, India, was registered as a 'Society' and 'Trust' on 26 February 2008. In the meantime, mobile telephone operators have begun to offer commercial broadcast services over GSM, evading completely government restrictions built around traditional concepts of broadcasting technology.

#### **SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY RADIO IN INDIA**

**(I) SARANG 107.8 FM :** SARANG 107.8 is run by St Aloysius College (Autonomous), Mangalore, a coastal town in the southern part of Karnataka. SARANG 107.8 FM means 'all colours' of Mangalore signifying various social, religious, linguistic communities and their harmonious existence - which is a requirement now after the disturbance in the context of attack on churches (post 14 September 2008) by radical saffronists, and later assault on



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women in a pub in the name of moral policing by similar groups. The local communities of farmers, fisher folk, medical/ legal experts, students, workers contribute regularly to this radio. The radio also spreads messages of peace and harmony among people through programmes based on the need for the same. Health and hygiene, agricultural messages, fisher folk issues, road safety, water conservation, rain water harvesting, folk culture and life, original entertainment by locals and students are the hall mark of this radio. Currently (as on the last day of July 2009), SARANG 107.8 broadcasts in Konkani, Kannada, Tulu, and English languages regularly, besides occasionally broadcasting in Malayalam and Beary languages(4)

(II) KUNJAL PANCHHI KUTCH JI :This community radio station is administered by Kach Women Development Corporation and is immensely popular among the rural womenfolk. This corporation is working in this area since last two decades. This radio station mostly focuses on the issues relating to women and tries to find a solution to all the problems being discussed here. The topic for discussion mostly consists of issues like female foetocide, dowry and female education.(5)

(III) CHALA HO GAON MEIN : The importance of this community radio lies in the fact that the programs broadcasted here is prepared by the people belonging to rural background. The programs basically cover issues like dowry, violence against women, corruption, social evils etc. Needless to say that ‘Chalo Ho Gao Me’ has really proved to be a landmark in providing common platform to the residents of Palamu district of Jharkhand from where they can communicate their thoughts without any restriction.

(IV) MANDAKINI KI AWAAZ : ‘Mandakini ki Awaaz’ Community Radio is located in Mandakini river valley at Pauri in Garhwal, supported by a group of people from a tiny village called Bhanaj. Located at a 5 hour drive from the nearest town centre of Rudraprayag, this group of people aims at creating an open and transparent administrative and governance information system. The radio group mediates between the people and the governing bodies (panchayats) of these villages, in order to create an open platform where policies, schemes and financial budgets can be made available for public discussion and scrutiny. It was established with required technical support and training from Ideosync Media Combine and

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Equal Access, the two NGOs working in the field of development communication and long standing partners of community radio(6)

## CONCLUSION

In the real sense, community radio plays a pivotal role in making the masses aware about their basic rights and duties. Not only limited to solving problems which a common man faces in his day-to-day life, community radio provides him a strong platform from where he can freely disseminate his ideas among his community members in the best possible manner. Thus, community radio becomes one of the important instrument in strengthening our 'Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression'. Besides solving social problems as well as entertaining local people, community radio also acts as an intermediary between the Government and the local masses. This is the place from where local people can air their grievances to the Government as well as get the solutions to their problems too. Needless to say, community radio has played a major role in bridging the communication gap between the Government and the local people. As, the community radio is still evolving it might be possible that in the near future, we will witness its various new forms which will be technologically more superior as well as user friendly. Well whatever the case may be, community radio has proved to be one of the best medium of communication at the grass-root level.

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