

# Community Radio an Instrument for Rural Development

## Abstract

Community Radio (CR) is generally the best tool for getting information to illiterate and poor communities. It provides the opportunity of reaching powerless communities and giving them a voice. The member of a community felt the need of a specific medium which would help them to share their own interest in their own way. CR is a broadcasting system established by the efforts of a specific community, operated for the purpose of community welfare.

This paper is based on secondary data. The secondary sources such as books and reports which reveals the importance of CRS in rural development.

Our study has analyzed the importance of Community Radio in rural development by reviewing the previous studies. Secondary data are used for the collection of data. The overall review of literature on community radio indicated that there have been an opportunity to improve the lifestyle of the rural people. This kind of research would help the researchers to understand how the Community Radio plays an important role in rural development.

**Keywords:** Community Radio, Rural Development and Importance

## Introduction

In many of the clustered villages there had been community radio rooms since radio was not a common man's consumer item because of its cost. Local people gathered wherever the radio was available in the locality. In the Indian case we have evidences of providing radio at the village centers such as panchayats by the public fund. At a specific time people gathered there with the purpose of listening to the radio. However, they also got an opportunity to share their ideas which was having a great effect on community life with the emergence of CR.

The community radio station is not a profit making institution. It is purely a service oriented system. The CR station can convey messages or knowledge to the targeted listeners community over radio regarding health, hygiene, etc. As CR stations broadcast / narrowcast / podcast (Web) their programmes over FM (Frequency Modulation) frequencies, it is easy to listen through mobile phone having FM facility, in a moving vehicle or places like garden, park and such places or computer users also. Its minimum coverage area is 15 to 20 kilometers. There are 198 community radio stations in India. CR stations focusing on community issues. This research work attempt to conduct a study on the importance of Community Radio in rural development.

In Indian context the community radio has greater possibilities of creating impact on society. India being a country of villages and the rural people being dominantly engaged in agriculture finds it convenient to listen to the radio for both information and entertainment. Such a need can be effectively satisfied by the community radio stations. The establishment of community radio in India began in the state of Andhra Pradesh and later it got spread to different states. Today we find a good number of community radio stations in various states.

Rural development is the process of improving the living condition of the people in rural areas. It aims at finding ways to improve rural lives with participation of rural people themselves. Community radio as a participatory radio gives wide opportunity to the development of rural society.

## Review of Literature

According to World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC.1988) 'community radio responds to the needs of the community it serves, contributing to its development within progressive perspectives in favor of social change. CR serves to democratize communication through

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community participation in different forms in accordance with each specific social context'.

Community radio is the voice of voiceless. It is the mouthpiece of oppressed people and it is a tool for rural development. Non profit making, community ownership and control, community participation are the three important aspects of CR. (Pavarala, Malik 2007:16)

According to Omonhinmin Gabriel the CR is a tool for development, because it provides programming that is particular to the community's identity and character. It also focuses on local culture. Culture is what a community says to itself, and what it says to others. It is how the people, the individual members of a community, express their dreams and hopes, and how they talk about their past and their future. It is what they care about. Like life itself, culture is infinitely variable; constantly evolving. It is the result of a process, not of definition. And that is why in democracies, governments are expected only to establish broad frameworks for cultural expression by the people access.

According to Singh and others (2010:13) the overall social impact of Namma Dhwani, a CR in Karnataka indicated that the participation and awareness created by Namma Dhwani programmes had great impact on leadership behavior. Leadership was accorded with the highest mean score of 0.7 and hence was ranked first and this was followed by health and sanitation, education, food habit and family system which were ranked second, third, fourth and fifth respectively. Dimensions such as leadership, family system, savings, education, health and sanitation, etc. have brought about significant changes in the life of the people in Boodikote village.

Community radio works in the cultural context of community it serves. It also deals with local issues in the local language or languages, it is relevant to local problems and concerns. Its aim is to help the community to develop socially, culturally and economically. The main location of community radio stations are mainly school/college/Universities, NGO, Krushi Vijnana Kendras.

The local participation always looking for fundamental identity that can supply element of self respect. It is possible only in the perpetuation of culture. The objectives of community radio are not restructured to give information but also includes bringing cultural uniformity by integrating it.

Community radio preserves the history, achievement, local values and norms, apart from conceding to the changes and transferring the past knowledge to the future generations. They should be helping to move onward by reflecting the best practices of the past while integrating the best practices taking place in the society around them. Another task of CR is to ensure knowledge management. This leads to the development of the nation. (Mainali Raghu, 61)

#### **Objectives of Community Radio Broadcasting**

1. To identify and promote nation, national language, arts, culture and folk tradition.
2. To promote and mobilize traditional wisdom, knowledge, skill and competence

3. To work as a dependable medium between people and government.
4. To evolve a progressive and disciplined culture in support of justice and democracy by boosting the cause of national unity, pride and self respect.
5. To enhance modern agricultural practices, science and technology among others.
6. To evolve entrepreneurial culture by encouraging national industry and domestic market.
7. To raise widespread awareness on issues like education, health, environment, sustainable development, human rights and community development.
8. Impress upon the need to evolve a culture of collective responsibility to uphold the rights of women and children.
9. To raise the agenda for the development of the backward and marginalized section of people by prioritizing their voice and concerns.
10. To encourage local talent and promote culture, folk arts, classical music, etc. (Ibid, 61)

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#### **Objectives**

1. To draw the significance of Community Radio
2. To explain how the Community Radio is needed for the rural development.

#### **Methodology**

This paper is based on secondary data. The secondary sources such as books and reports which reveal about the importance of CR. The study will help in understanding the power of CR in strengthening the rural society.

#### **Development, Cultural Change and Transition**

The modern concept of development gives emphasis to human and social development and does not end with economic development. There can not be any sustainable development unless people can become the agents of their own development and do not remain just a beneficiary. They are required to participate in every stage of the development process and in its decision making. Empowering the people at the grassroots and the capacity building are the major concerns for modern development.

Community radio can play a significant and effective role in modern concepts of development like the human development index and human security. It can also be a platform for bringing accountability of the development process, ultimately making the system more transparent and good governance. (Pavarala, Malik 2007: 2-30)

The transition has traditionally been characterized as forms of change. These may either be inner changes or the physical move from one place to another. The transition seemed to be an appropriate concept since both the beginning and end stage of the ongoing sequence of change were taken for granted.

Research on life transitions highlights the normative and non-normative changes that individuals experience over time. During the past two decades, life course perspectives have provided a strategic

context for studying the genesis of life transitions and their personal and social consequences. Both population based and individual models of transitions have become more complex, focusing on the ways that social and historical contexts shape life transitions. At the individual level, progress has also been made in identifying the mechanisms by which transitions affect outcomes.

The definitions of culture variously include as components ideas, concepts, values, ideologies, attitudes, goals, norms, learned behaviors, symbols, rites, rituals, customs, myths, habits and/or art. Cultural change is a concept that denotes some internal and external factors leading to change in the cultural pattern of societies. Culture can be material as well as non-material in nature. Cultural change may come from many sources, but most of them comes through contact with another culture, inventions and internal adjustment of culture.

The contact between the societies will change the culture of societies through the process of diffusion and acculturation. Any technological evolution will bring a change in the culture also. The geographical and ecological factor is a natural or physical factor. Any change in the physical features will lead to a change in their culture, habits and way of living.

Culture gives meaning to our relationship with the other, as it also forms our subjective identity. Therefore culture enters into the processes of social change in many forms and at various levels. It defines the quality of social change as its indicator. The Indian people have also shown cultural resilience in decodification of the cultural meaning of symbols projected by mass media of communication. Rapid changes have also taken place at other levels of consumption pattern and lifestyle. The electrification in villages has changed the energy-use pattern, particularly in the sub-urban villages, in remote villages, the use of firewood and cow dung is still common, sawdust is a new source of energy, the use of kerosene oil, gobar gas plants, and use of solar energy, the expansion of road networks and means of communication has brought about some homogenization in tastes and consumption patterns. (Singh Y 2012 :25-52)

The electronic media of communication like radio is revolutionizing the modes of intercultural and inter-group communicative actions. The mass media convert members of communities into the audience. (Ibid, 2012 :51-60)

David Dressier and Donald Carns have made some observations with regard to the causes of cultural changes. Sometimes members of society are often controlled by customs that differs from those which they have learnt to accept such a situation they adopt some of the new customs, reject others, and follow modified versions of others. Changes in the culture are always superimposed on existing culture, especially during the cultural contact. All the cultural changes are not equally important. Some changes are introduced to culture because they are considered necessary for human survival. Some other changes

are accepted in order to satisfy socially acquired needs not essential for survival.

It is a fact of common observation that crisis tends to produce or accelerate cultural changes. If the changes are accepted once due to the crisis, they tend to persist. Cultural change is cumulative in total effect. In other words cultural change leads to chain reaction. Whenever a change is incorporated into the culture and become defined as a 'social necessity', new needs emerge.

Through a variety of programmes based on various fields community radio is bringing some kind of socio-cultural transition in our rural society. Day by day the need for community radio is increasing. Community radio broadcasts programmes in the area of agriculture, education, personal hygiene, health and nutrition, literacy, social issues, environment protection, female literacy, women's issues and empowerment, girl child, sex ratio, self motivation and career guidance, culture, bank loans, local problems, legal issues and so on.

According to AMARC community radio is a rural radio, co-operative radio, participatory radio, alternative, popular, education radio. They are located in isolated rural village and in the heart of the largest cities in the world. Their signals may reach only a kilometer, cover a whole country or be carried via short wave to other parts of the world. Some of them are owned by nonprofit groups or co-operative whose members are the listeners themselves. Others are owned by students, Universities, municipalities, churches, trade unions. These are financed by donations from listeners, by international development agencies, by advertising and by governments.

Now a days government is spending million of rupees in the name of rural development but still it is not getting the desired results. But the first and foremost reason behind this is the communication gap between government devised policies and common masses. Common people remain ignorant regarding the policies because of lack of information, proper guidance and lack of training. Community radio proved most effective as it can easily cover a wider range of audience. The voice of people their culture and aspirations are reflected through CR and this in turn leads to larger listenership.

Namma Dhvani CRS in Karnataka, has worked with MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) programme on providing awareness to the community on the benefits, procedures and the eligibility criteria of the programme. This Community radio station also worked on the *Swachata Andolan* along with the Government to create awareness on keeping the village clean and sanitized. Through this programme, it has also been successful in building over 500 toilets by encouraging SHG women to take an interest free loan from their own group to construct toilets which were then repaid by money received from the *Gram Panchayat* as part of the *Swachata Andolan* Programme. Department of Agriculture officers approach Namma Dhvani to announce to the farmers the kind of Schemes that they have and the subsidies available to the farmers through the

Department. Over 300 farmers have utilized the facility. Namma Dhwani has worked with JSYS; Public and Private hospitals; Veterinary Department; schools; etc. Namma Dhwani CRS has worked with National Banks on providing information on Kisan Credit Cards for farmers, term loan for livestock, bore well, dug well, sericulture, etc. and cash credit for business.

The CEMCA- UNICEF field based analysis reveals that Kalanjiam Samuga Vanoli set up by DHAN Foundation, an Non Governmental Organization based in a village Vilunthamavadi of Nagapattinam district in Tamilnadu acme up to use information and communication as a tool for social change and thereby prepare the coastal community to cope with disasters, build resilience to cope with such disasters and strengthen their livelihoods. A case study on this Community radio station says that at the time of stress related suicides are increasing among the student community ,a testimony from a community member of Kalanjiam endorses the salutary influence of the Community Radio station. The agricultural programmes has been able to raise the cultivation of the particular villages. Programmes on Self help Groups has enhanced their performance and disaster management. Programmes have inspired the fishermen to take precautionary measures suggested by the experts. (Abiding Voices 2012:81-83)

#### **Conclusion:**

The review of literature has shown that there has been very less research work done regarding this subject. So this kind of research may help government to frame some new plans and policies on expanding communication technology. Such a development will really strengthen the CR stations to be active agents in social progress as well as in the rural development. Community radio stations really create a path for employment opportunities. Social researchers and teachers will get an exposure to put their resources for use through the community radio stations. Central and State governments have to give more advertisement and sponsored programmes and thereby financial support in order to strengthen the community radio stations.

This study reveals the significance of community radio and explain as an instrument how the community radio is needed for the rural development.

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